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THE LIFE OF A SCOTTISH PROBATIONER.

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THE LIFE

OF A

SCOTTISH PROBATIONER.

BEING A MEMOIR OF

THOMAS DAVIDSON,

WITH HIS POEMS AND EXTRACTS FROM HIS LETTERS.

BY

JAMES BROWN,

MINISTER OF ST. JAMES' STREET CHURCH, PAISLEY.

23040

"A life which cannot challenge the world's attention; yet which does modestly solicit it, and perhaps, on clear study, will be found to reward it."—*Carlyle's Life of Sterling.*

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GLASGOW:

JAMES MACLEHOSE, ST. VINCENT STREET,

Publisher to the University.

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PREFACE.

WHEN Thomas Davidson died, in 1870, the wish was expressed by many of those who had enjoyed the privilege of his friendship, that his poems and a selection from his letters should be published. Circumstances, which it is unnecessary to explain, led to unexpected delay in giving effect to this wish. Last year, at a meeting of such of Davidson's more intimate friends as could be brought together in Edinburgh, the present Editor was requested to undertake the responsibility of preparing the desired memorial. He would have hesitated to accede to this request, which he deemed it a high honour to receive, had he expected that more would be required than editorial

supervision and the preparation of a short prefatory record of the facts and dates of Davidson's brief career. But, when the necessary material came into his hands, and had been submitted to friends on whose judgment in literary matters he could rely, he was induced to attempt the preparation of such a biography as might serve, not only for a memorial of Davidson, but for a picture of the life of a Scottish Probationer. The Editor is deeply sensible of how imperfectly he has realized the idea he has had before him, but he has seen no reason to regret that the idea was suggested. The remarkable poems, and still more remarkable letters, which it is his privilege to introduce to the public will, he ventures to hope, be read with the greater interest that they are embedded in the biography of their author, whose life all who knew him believed to be more beautiful than anything he ever wrote. And the records of the individual life need be none the less valuable to those who seek a memorial of that life, that the form in which they are presented is intended to awaken interest in the toils and trials of a class of men to whom the Church owes much, but

whom, it is to be feared, she often treats with some measure of coldness, if not of neglect.

In harmony with the primary purpose of the book, which is the publication of Davidson's literary remains, the Editor has sought in every case, where it was possible, to unfold the biography, alike in the outward facts and in the development of the inner life, by means of the poems, the letters, and the journals. This has involved the publication—especially in the earlier chapters—of some letters which have a biographical rather than a literary value.

In determining what poems should be published the Editor has been to a large extent relieved from responsibility. In the last year of his life Davidson copied into a note-book such of his verses as he deemed worthy of preservation. Almost all the pieces given on the following pages are included in that MS. volume.

The Editor has to express his thanks to Davidson's friends and correspondents for the help they have given him, and specially to Mr. James Elliot, for invaluable aid in the revision of proofs.

It seems fitting, also, that he should express, in behalf of the friends whom he represents, gratitude to Mr. George Gilfillan of Dundee, and to Dr. Alexander MacLeod of Birkenhead, for their generous and appreciative notices of such of Davidson's poems as have come into their hands.

ST. JAMES' MANSE,
PAISLEY, *29th November, 1876.*

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THE LIFE

OF A

SCOTTISH PROBATIONER.

CHAPTER I.

The School-boy.

'THOMAS DAVIDSON was born on 7th July, 1838, at Oxnam Row, a large farm lying along the bank of Oxnam Water, a tributary of the Teviot, about four miles from Jedburgh. Though thus born on Scottish ground, he was of English extraction. His father, who was a shepherd, belonged to the neighbourhood of Wooler, and his mother to Belford. They were married in England, but after the birth of their eldest child they migrated to the northern side of the Border. This migration did not involve much change. The aspect of the pastoral country on both sides of the dividing line between the two kingdoms is the same. There is little difference in the habits of life, and in the case of the Davidsons there was no change of church,

or of the forms of religious thought and worship. They had been born in the Communion of the Scottish Secession, which, having from the earliest days of its history a firm hold of the population of the Border counties of Scotland, had passed over into England and taken root in many of the towns and villages of Northumberland. When Jonah Davidson settled on Oxnam Water, he found himself in the midst of traditions which tended to confirm his attachment to the principles of Presbyterian Dissent. The Oxnam Parish Church, which stands picturesquely on a height overlooking the road to Jedburgh, was the scene of the ministry of the younger Boston, who, in 1757, left his snug retreat to go to the relief of the patronage-oppressed parishioners of Jedburgh, and was one of the associates of Thomas Gillespie of Carnock in founding the Synod of Relief, which, in 1847, joined with the older Secession to form the United Presbyterian Church. The stalwart shepherd, accustomed to his daily rounds on the hill, found intervening miles no obstacle in the way of continued adherence to the church of his birth. He connected himself with the Blackfriars Secession congregation in Jedburgh, then under the ministry of the late Dr. Nicol, who was well known in that district and beyond it as an accomplished scholar and gentleman. This denominational attachment on the part of the father had an important influence in determining the career of the son. It is unquestionable that in Scotland the Church is to be credited with much of the literary, as well as the

religious life of the nation. The distinctive type of teaching in the Scottish Church—for the preservation of which the Seceders contended with peculiar zeal—has been such as to stimulate thought. The recognised position of the laity under the Presbyterian order encourages a lively interest on the part of the humblest members of the Church in those high questions lying on the border-land between philosophy and theology which are formulated in the Church's creed. Especially in those districts where the occupations of the people are such as neither to produce great bodily fatigue, nor unduly to engross the mind, these questions are much pondered and keenly debated. Among the pastoral population of the rural districts, as well as among hand-loom weavers in the smaller manufacturing towns, the Church has been instrumental in keeping alive an intellectual activity, which has often borne fruit in other directions than those she would have wished. The fact that Scotland has produced from the ranks of her peasantry so many men distinguished not only in theology, but in literature and science, is to be traced in large measure to the influences of her church life, which, though in some directions confessedly narrow, are in others wide and most truly catholic. It has been in the barn-like edifices where our fathers worshipped, and through the long and, in some aspects of them, dreary services in which they delighted, that many a young soul whom narrowing circumstances would otherwise have cramped and kept in obscurity, has had his first glimpses into the world of thought,

and been stirred with his first intellectual ambitions. And the wisdom of the founders of our Scottish Church placed within reach of the lowliest the means of nurturing the intellectual life thus awakened. Not only in every hamlet, but even by lonely waysides among the hills, there stood the school, whose "Dominie," oftenest a student struggling through his long course of training for the pulpit, or perchance a "stickit minister," who had lacked the gift of utterance necessary to command a popular election, or the social influence necessary to secure a presentation, was always ready to welcome a pupil who showed any aptitude for the higher branches.

The house where Thomas Davidson first saw the light was the shepherd's cottage attached to the farm steading of Oxnam Row. It has been swept away, and its site, marked by a young sapling, is now part of the lawn of a new farm-house. It had a pleasant outlook across a holm of good corn land through which the Oxnam flows, to a long green hill from which the farm takes its name of "The Row." In the distance to the right you catch glimpses of the range of the Cheviots rising beyond their outliers, which form the foreground of the view. To the left, looking down the stream, there is the wooded height on which Oxnam Church peeps out from among the trees. All who knew Davidson, with his quiet reserve of manner, all who listen to the quiet music of his verse, would recognise a harmony between his mental characteristics and the scene where he spent

his earliest years. There is nothing in the green valley, to bid the traveller pause, but there is a gentle beauty in the grassy slopes, with occasional gleams of light where the water of the winding stream is seen glancing in the sun. Over all there broods a delicious stillness, hardly broken by the murmur of the water, the bleating of the sheep, or the fitful sounds of the quiet labour of the farm. Tom gave early evidence of that love of nature which became a passion as life advanced. When only four years old, he used to accompany his father on his rounds among the hills. If the way proved too long for the little feet, his father would leave him by the side of some whin-bush with strict charge not to stir from it till he returned to fetch him. There he would sit for hours hearing

> "The hum of bees in heather bells,
> And bleatings from the distant fells."

Only on one occasion does his father remember to have found him crying on his return. The absence had been longer than usual, and the sense of loneliness had for once overpowered the little dreamer. His education in the direction in which he was destined most to excel, really began in these rambles and watchings on the hill. That lonely hill-side was the young poet's first school. But book-learning was not neglected. About a mile further up the stream than The Row, there is a little wayside school to which Tom, when he was only five years old, was sent with

one of his sisters, and where he was taught by a queer old "dominie," whom the tradition of the neighbourhood pictures as "a little man with a short leg and a crutch." One of his school-fellows, who was, indeed, his chosen companion, still lives hard by. All who knew Davidson in later years were aware of a power which was peculiarly his own, of attaching to him his friends and companions with a deep and lasting affection. That power must have been early developed. This companion of his childhood seldom saw him after the family left Oxnam Row, fully thirty years ago, yet he speaks of him with tenderness, as of one whose friendship once enjoyed is a possession for ever. His account of their companionship gives us a pleasant glimpse of Scottish boy-life. "They used to dook thegither, and rin races naked to dry themselves." It seems that "dooking" was in the case of both a forbidden pleasure indulged in secretly, but often discovered at home, when bed-time came, by the fact that strings and buttons were all awry, and not as careful mothers' hands had fastened them in the morning.

When Tom was eight years old, the family removed to Corbet House, on the Kale Water, in the neighbourhood of Morebattle; but in about a year there was another migration in the nomadic shepherd life. They went to the farm of Riccalton, on the upper reaches of Oxnam Water, near Carter Fell, and about twelve miles south of Jedburgh. The shepherd's cottage belonging to the farm was called Strip-end,

and was their home for two years. Both church and school were distant, but the father ungrudgingly made the twelve miles' journey every Sunday to worship in Blackfriars, and Tom found his way daily in summer —less regularly in winter—to Hindhope school, about half the distance. It was here that the boy's love of reading came to be remarked. He had already devoured every scrap of child's literature that he could lay hands on. *Jack the Giant Killer* and *Whittington and his Cat* had been mastered. At six years old he was familiar with Blind Harry, and, even before he could read, his mind was filled with a mass of Border traditions and ballads. The resources of the country side in the matter of books adapted to a boy of his age were not great, and his appetite for knowledge was keen. His father took in the *Kelso Chronicle*, a weekly print of some standing in these Border districts. On the day when it was due, Tom used to wander far out to meet the messenger, and, having got the paper, found his way into some quiet corner, never emerging till he had read every line of it. It is a touching picture—the country-bred boy dreaming among the hills, listening eagerly to the echoes of the great world as they came to him through the medium of the *Kelso Chronicle*.

In 1849 there was yet another removal. Mr. Davidson found employment on the farm of Woodhead, in the parish of Ancrum. One of a row of labourers' cottages on the side of a country road was assigned to the shepherd, and was the home of the

family till 1860—from Tom's twelfth to his twenty-third year. There is nothing specially romantic in the humble cottage, but in the far-reaching view which it commands there was much to nourish Tom's peculiar tastes. Looking up the Ale he could see the heights of Ruberslaw and Minto Crags, the latter the residence of Miss Elliot, whose touching version of "The Flowers of the Forest" it was his delight in after years to sing. Tweedside and the Eildon Hills are visible from the rising-ground behind. Looking to the left he had, from the cottage, a view of Teviotdale and of the monument-crowned height of Penielheugh, with a far-stretching expanse of wood and stream, terminated in the distance by the Cheviots. In the immediate foreground is the richly-wooded valley in which the Ale makes pleasant music, and on the other side of which lies the pretty village of Ancrum. The path by which he went to the village school was through this valley, and to tread that path morning and evening for five or six years was no unimportant part of a poet's education. Descending from the highway and crossing a field, it strikes the high bank of the stream, which is seen gleaming through the leaves of overhanging trees. It follows the course of the river for some distance, till it crosses it by a quaint old bridge, at the end of which stands the Parish Church with the aisle in which the Scotts of Ancrum lie buried under their white marble tombstones. The footpath then turns down the river brink

till it reaches the end of one of those splendid cliffs of Old Red Sandstone, so common in that district. In the end of the cliff there is a large deep cave called "Maggie Dun's Cove," which has of course the usual traditions attaching to such places to deepen the mystery of its vaulted recesses. It was Tom's delight to climb into the cave, which doubtless his young imagination peopled with other forms than those that are visible in the light of common day. The footpath to Ancrum ascends along the summit of the cliff, on the giddy ledge of a sheer precipice which is so covered with trees that the river, the gentle murmur of which comes up from far below, is almost hidden. The village itself is quaint and picturesque. Lying round a three-cornered green skirted with trees and having a cross in the centre, it has a thoroughly English aspect, not unbefitting the fact that it is very near the border, and on the debateable land where the peculiarities of the two countries shade off into each other. Along this sweet path Tom trudged day by day, drinking in its beauty, to the little school where he contrived to pick up from a teacher who confesses that he had "considerable difficulty in keeping out of his way," a respectable knowledge of Latin and Greek. But he had other teachers than the Ancrum "dominie." His love for books was fast developing into a passion. At the farm on which his father served there resided two grandchildren of Dr. M'Crie, the biographer of John Knox. They were lads about his own age, and a close friendship existed between

him and them. They had the command of books which would otherwise have been inaccessible to him, and he drew largely on their stores. It could not be but that, with the border-land stretched out before him, he should become a student of Sir Walter Scott. When his daily lessons had been mastered, he would sit far into the night reading his novels and his minstrelsy. They have a story in the family that one night when the Magician had led him far into dreamland, on his way to bed he trod on some lucifer matches, which exploded under his feet, and that the house was awakened by the cry, "Oh, mother, mother, there's fire flying from my heels." The anxious mother answered him, "Oh, laddie, laddie, if ye dinna stop reading Walter Scott he'll turn your heid." But his reading was not confined to what he calls "the literature of levity." The M'Crie library at the farm furnished heavier food for his boyish appetite. His letters of this period contain such scraps as the following—"I'm reading Redhead's *Revolutions*. They're splendid both in point of description and of composition. Some of his passages are peculiarly grand: he sometimes soars into the regions of sublimity," etc. "I've read M'Crie's *Review of 'Old Mortality;'* he gives him what you would call a reddin' up." "I am at present reading John Knox's *History of the Scottish Reformation*, a ponderous volume, but withal full of good solid information, written in an old quaint style, but relieved here and there with pieces of humour, which, although pretty

coarse-looking to a reader of the nineteenth century, still tend to enliven it a piece: for you know that a whin-bush would look as well in the desert of Sahara as the rose of Sharon in the vale of Tempé."

The letters from which these extracts are made were written when he was sixteen. They were addressed to Mr. Scott, his former teacher at Ancrum, who had removed from the district. On the suggestion of the Rev. Dr. Nicol, who, on a pastoral visitation, had discovered the remarkable ability of the shepherd's son, Tom was enrolled in the summer of 1854 as a pupil in the Nest Academy in the town of Jedburgh. This involved a walk of five miles each way, but the enthusiastic student reckoned the toil a cheap price to pay for the superior advantages of a secondary school. It was a new world to him, and he entered with enthusiasm into the work prescribed and the competitions with the town boys. His letters to Mr. Scott give expression to his unaffected wonder at the ways of the new school. The English pronunciation of the Latin greatly amazes him, but he congratulates himself that his pronunciation of French is more satisfactory than that of his classfellows—"for they give the nasals the real broad ongs and angs." He notes for the benefit of his former teacher some rules to guide him in this matter which he has recently acquired. "We get," he says further, "tremendous drillings in history and geography: they have the dates of all the kings that have reigned or battles that have been fought in England; nevertheless, if I am put

down at a date, I generally retake my position at the relation of facts." We can gather from the account he gives of his work that it must have been a thoroughly well-taught school. His first teacher there was Mr. Miller, to whom he soon became warmly attached, and whose sudden death in February, 1855, he characterises as "decidedly a calamity." There is a touching simplicity in his description of the last he saw of him. "The last day he was in the school he seemed as hale and as healthy as ever he was. I only noticed that he sometimes put up his hand and pressed his brow as if he felt pain in his head; and sometimes he never seemed to hear what was going on. The last thing he did was giving us a lesson on Virgil's *Eighth Eclogue*, which we translated, and a great part of it I think he didn't hear at all. We just finished the translation of it at 10 o'clock, so he took up his hat, saying, 'We'll resume this in the afternoon,' but he never came in again. . . . He just spoke to me on the Tuesday of learning German, which he said he wished me to begin, for he would make no charge. I was quite delighted with this, but what I've got to do now I know not; I'm at my wit's end." His letters express impatience for the appointment of a new teacher, his disappointment in the man first chosen, and his gratification when he made way for one more to his mind, "a nice, careful, painstaking, cheerful sort of a chap of tremendous stature and volume." Under the new teacher he seems to have gone through a fair amount of

work in Latin, Greek, French, and Mathematics. Among his books there is a prize gained by him as "dux" in Euclid, 1st August, 1855. But the school reading did not satisfy him. "I have begun," he says, April 7th, 1855, "to read Mr. Homer's *Iliad* on my own account. I find it grand and even peculiarly interesting, so much so, indeed, that I frequently take him to Jedburgh with me to while away the road in coming out. Some of his epithets are very fine. . . . Indeed when I happen to take him up before I begin to my lessons, I generally have to postpone them till the next morning. I fell in with —— the other night, and got from him the works of Thomas Reid, D.D., edited by Sir William Hamilton, to read. It's a metaphysical book of tremendous volume and gravity, consisting of some 1,000 pages or so, closely printed, and as large as your *Imperial Dictionary*." April 24th—"Your brother Tom is down to-night, and he is going to bring me some of Macaulay's *Essays*. There's Hamilton's *Philosophy* [his edition of Reid, it may be presumed] lying before me, every time I look at it it makes my blood run cold. It is, in fact, a terrible eye-sore." May 14th—"I have still Reid's *Philosophy*, at which I take a spell occasionally. It's very curious; it requires an effort to make me attack him, and another to lay him down again. A more readable book, however, is the *Life of Sir Walter Scott* by Lockhart, which also belongs to Mr. ——, and upon which I am also engaged; it abounds with interest and anec-

dote. I have only got it for two months, as he lifts at the end of that time, and I have had it for a fortnight now nearly." July 2nd—"I am really very much pleased with Lockhart's *Life*. He contrives to be so minute and yet so interesting that one can't help being taken up with him. I regret, however, that I won't be able to finish it, as I am not half through, and have scarcely another month, for —— will be away in that time."

But those school-boy letters are not altogether occupied with books. They reveal that then, as always, Tom found a subject of study in the characters of those about him, and in all the homeliest incidents of their daily life. He gave his correspondent all the gossip of the little village, sometimes in sentences in which there is a funny mixture of Latin, Greek, French, and English. The marriages and deaths are duly recorded, and all the steps toward the settlement of "a helper for the Dr." seem to have been watched with deep interest by the future probationer. Occasionally a great light came and shone for a season in the Blackfriars' pulpit. "We have had Dr. MacFarlane preaching yesterday and the Fast Day. He is, I think, one of the best preachers I ever heard. You'll perhaps remember him at the soiree of 1854." Every passing thunderstorm finds a record on those pages, and there are graphic descriptions of the rigours of the memorable winter of 1854-55. February 21st, 1855—"We have had and still have a heavy storm upon our part of the country; and we are at the present moment

enjoying one of the most tremendous frosts which have made their appearance for the last fifteen or twenty years. The councils of war which are being held every morning (subject, how the cattle and sheep are to be kept alive) are most distressing. The two cutters with which they used to cut the turnips of the cattle, were both destroyed the other morning in useless attempts to cut some provender for them, and the byre-man's hand freezing to the aforesaid machine, he had to thank his patience that he did not tear the hide from off his paws. . . . This has been a very sickly season in Ancrum. The most of the old persons are either sick or dead." Those were the Crimean days, and the echoes of the great world are of growing interest to the school-boy.—November 1st, 1854. "We were quite overwhelmed on Tuesday by the blood of 10,000 Russians in the Crimea, a dispatch from Canrobert, probably true," etc., etc. The prospect of a nearer medium through which the intelligence of contemporary history is to come, is welcome to the boy with his literary instincts. "You (as you used to take some interest in the affairs of Jethart) will be gratified to hear that we are going to get a newspaper set on foot here; I don't know the name of it, but Mr. Jeffrey the lawyer is to be editor, and Easton proprietor of it. Good luck to it! I say, good luck to it!"

Tom had begun, even as a school-boy, to write poetry. His old teacher is his confidant, to whom he sends his effusions, and whose criticisms he

earnestly begs and receives good humouredly, even when they are not very laudatory. "Much obliged to you for your criticism; the affair I looked on myself as very poor; in short, it was the only thing at hand to fill up the letter. The most important word, however, in your 'breath,' I was utterly unable to decipher, a fact which of course stood greatly in the way of my profiting very much by it. Upon the whole, however, I am never happier than when I have thrown off a few verses that I deem tolerable, which in my opinion these are not. I have some more poetry, but it's not yet transcribed. In mine humble opinion it is better than the last. You shall judge of that for yourself. There is a piece, however, which I enclose, and which I intend should compose part of a larger piece. . . . 'Tis not much worth, but you'll see, and give me your opinion next time. I have no time for any originality to-day. I am very much obliged to you for your criticism; but with the opinion you express anent the two lines, I can't exactly say I agree."

Many poems of this period have been preserved by loving hands in the note-books into which the author had neatly transcribed them. It would be unfair to reproduce even a specimen; but they are interesting as revealing the three chief sources from which the Scottish school-boy drew his inspiration. These were Scottish history, the Bible, and Nature. Bannockburn and Flodden are celebrated at length. So are the Exodus, the Captivity, and the Flood. But Nature is the prevailing theme. There are

pictures of her varying aspects which, though drawn by a hand that is only struggling after the art of expression, yet reveal an eye that has already the gift of vision, and a heart that has learned thus early to beat in unison with the manifold life of field and wood. There is in those efforts a pre-Raphaelite minuteness which shows a habit of careful observation, full of promise for the years to come. There is, above all, a deep and loving sympathy. It is manifest that the boy's education was making progress in his long daily walks to and from the Jedburgh school, as truly as when he was within its walls. His way lay through the Ancrum woods, with their grand beeches, their towering limes, and their herds of deer wandering in the sunny glades, and then on to the great highway between the Scottish and English capitals, with the policies of Mount Teviot lying in the hollow to the left. When the weather was fine he would take a more direct road. Leaving the highway after he had crossed Ancrum Bridge, he would go up by a footpath to the wooded ridge between the valleys of the Teviot and the Jed, and, passing through the "picturesquely situated yett" on which he used so often to lean in after years, he would descend by a pleasant path between luxuriant hedgerows, to the quaint old town. As he sauntered along this varied road with his satchel on his back and his Homer in his hand, he kept his eyes and his ears open to the sights and sounds of nature. He was intensely susceptible to the influences of the heroic past, which

was called up at every turn, and spoken of by every wind that swept over that Border country. He had already, as we have seen, learned its ballads by heart. He knew not the words only, but the music, and would hum, as he walked, the weird tunes that chord so well with the sighing of the winds and the rippling of the streams. Sometimes the way must have been dreary enough, when ere his return the winter night had fallen. They tell at home that one evening, at a time when there was prevalent in the district one of those stories of a ghost perambulating the neighbourhood, which from time to time take their rise in country places, and which in Sir Walter's country had naturally taken the form of a white lady, Tom was later than usual, and one of his sisters went out to meet him. The school-boy was trudging bravely home in the gathering darkness when he caught sight of his sister's white apron. Thinking it was "the white lady," he leapt the fence and made a long but rapid circuit to the house, which he reached before the wearer of the apron. To the young dreamer, who laboured hard by day and sat far into the night, who saw much in nature that was hidden from the eyes of those around him, and who held habitual communion with the life of the past, the veil that hides the unseen was easily drawn aside.

The time is approaching when the new world of college will open to him. We find him through the summer of 1855 working hard that he may take his place creditably as a student of arts. He has never

till now been far from home. His friend and correspondent, Mr. Scott, who had settled in Crossford in Lanarkshire, had sent him an invitation to visit him. The vacation is at hand, and he would fain see something of the world, but he writes touchingly and characteristically—"Quoad your proposal concerning my coming over, I cannot as yet decide. You know that I have little chance of being able to come on my own resources, and I don't like to apply to my father for money, for I shall yet stand in enough need of it. I will think about it, however." At the close of the same letter he says—"Your brother Thomas was down the other night and gave me a very glowing description of the Falls of Clyde; so much so, indeed, that I feel a very strong desire to come over and see them in *propriâ personâ*. In your next give me directions as to the journey, in case I do come over." It does not appear that the journey was made. When a shepherd is about to send his son to a university, there is not generally much to spare for other purposes.

CHAPTER II.

The Student of Arts.

IN the winter of 1855 Davidson matriculated as a student in the University of Edinburgh. It is the glory of our Scottish Universities that their gates are thrown open, on equal terms, to men of all churches and of all classes of society. The shepherd's son from the banks of the Teviot takes his place in the class-room and occupies the same bench with the son of the Lord of Session or of the country squire, with nothing to mark his social inferiority. The scholar from the provincial Grammar School, or even from the Parish School, finds himself in competition with the "dux" of the High School or Academy, and not unfrequently wins the highest honours. To none has the first experience of University life so great a charm as to the country student. Everything is new to him. The great city to which he has come is itself a wonder. One so susceptible to natural beauty, and so saturated with the traditions of Scottish history as Davidson, could

not fail to find delight in wandering through the streets and among the environs of Edinburgh. His was an eye that could never weary of the view from Princes Street, with its marvellous blending of the old and new—the towering Castle Rock and the rugged line of many-storied tenements, grey with the storms of centuries, looking across the valley—from the depths of which the noises of the railway come up—to the bright buildings and gay life of the modern city. It was a joy to him to catch glimpses from the heights of George Street, of the blue Firth and the green Lomonds beyond. The lion-like form of Arthur's Seat, that guards the city; the Calton Hill, with its monuments, which, taken separately, are so poor, but which together form so picturesque a group; the Braid Hills, with their memories of *Marmion*, and the more distant Pentlands, soon became to him familiar sources of delight. He loved to wander by the old Palace of Holyrood and through the ancient streets that lead to it. He gazed with interest on the tall houses, with their carved memorials of a magnificence that has given place to squalor and wretchedness. The youth who generally regained his position "at the relation of facts" in the history class at Jedburgh, found it easy, in his wanderings through the historic city, to transport himself from the common-place bustle of its modern life into the midst of the stately pageants and the famous struggles of other days.

In the Universities of Scotland no provision is

made for the residence of students. Each one is left to find lodgings for himself. This is a feature of Scottish student life which must be taken into account in estimating the nature of its influence. To the country lad his coming to college is to some extent an entrance on life. He has a sense of freedom and a sense of responsibility which are no unimportant part of his education. He chooses his lodging; he is master of it; he selects his companions; he apportions his time. Beyond the class-hours no control is exercised by the college authorities over his employments. Such a system has, of course, its risks. It offers temptations to idleness to those who have no enthusiasm for their work, and it gives peculiar facilities for cultivating companionships which sometimes prove ruinous. But, on the other hand, it fosters a spirit of self-reliance. When the temptations of freedom are successfully resisted, the will is strengthened for undertaking the graver responsibilities of after life. Davidson was fortunate in finding a staid companion to share his lodgings. Mr. Scott, his former teacher and correspondent, who was only a few years his senior, had gone to the city a month before him, to attend Moray House Training School. They lived together at 4 East Broughton Place, with a landlady whom Mr. Scott describes as "honest and careful, and rather encouraging to us, as strangers to the town." The lads needed such encouragement. Mr. Scott acknowledges that they made ludicrous blunders, which,

however, only provided material for Davidson's peculiar humour, and for pleasant reminiscence in after years. There was one standing cause of dispute between the students and the mistress of the house. The careful landlady was accustomed to watch the indicator of the gas meter with jealous eye, and was sadly distressed by the waste involved in Davidson's early acquired habit of sitting far into the night. Spite of this point of contention, the relation seems to have been amicable, for Davidson returned to the same lodging session after session during the whole of his University course. For four successive years he came to the city at the beginning of November, and left it in April, spending the long summer recess at his father's house. Even during the session he had much to remind him of home. His box was regularly despatched to Woodhead, and came back to him in due course with his linen, redolent of the flowery braes by the banks of Ale, and having every spare nook filled with home-baked bread, and with some dainty—perhaps a pot of jelly made of fruit grown in the cottage garden—which would taste the sweeter that it had been placed in its corner by the hands of the thoughtful mother whose presence made home bright, and in token that she was not unmindful of the student son, who might one day stand in the Doctor's pulpit and bring honour to the house. Each opening of the box would fill the student's lodging with odours of home, which could not fail to act as counteractives to the evil influences of city life, and as

stimulants to work his best, were it only for the sake of those who were making loving sacrifice for him.

It was a characteristic of Davidson that he cherished the memory of home with peculiar affection. Among the new associations of college life, he never lost his interest in his beloved Roxburghshire. Mr. Scott tells us that he used to sit for hours over their winter fire talking of the scenes of other days—telling stories of the rude Border-land among the hills where he spent the first years of his life. In a letter written during his first autumn session at the Divinity Hall he says—"Sometimes I sit here in the gloaming (as now) looking away out over the Forth to the hills of Fife, that bound our visible horizon, thinking with envy and regret of the years that have been; visited with memories of harvests that I have seen in bygone times—of the flashing sickles, the rustling corn, the late leading when the hairst moon is in the lift shining over all—and even of the misty mornings, when the rime is on the grass, and the fine cobweb-network tapestries all the brown hedges. No doubt you are thinking I'm setting all this down for the sake of filling my letter; but perhaps you will believe me when I tell you solemnly that I have been several times *half-greetin'* since I began this same epistle!" In a letter of some years later date, after giving a ludicrous description of how he and a companion had been driven to the Café in search of their dinner, because a fellow-lodger in charge of the commissariat had ordered salt herrings and potatoes for the mid-day

meal—moved thereto by the fact that, in his "habit of chanting in an ejaculatory manner certain random lines, generally the introductory ones, of any song that suggested itself," the particular line which Tom was most frequently crooning over at that time was—

"I hae laid a herrin' in saut"—

he speaks of the dinner they ordered, and specially of the apple-tart. "We dwelt upon the analysis of the thing as we devoured it for I don't know how long, till, in fact, it became by a process of imaginary disintegration no longer the mere synthetic apple-tart at all. Tart! it was no simple tart we were eating! It was an aggregate of all savoury substances, of all delicate essences, of all delicious dainties. There was flour in it, fine flour, at the sowing whereof ploughboys had whistled, over the green expanse whereof birds had lilted and warbled, and at the reaping whereof the reapers had sung the songs of harvest. And had not the miller, that by the wondrous alchemy of his mysterious art transmogrified the yellow grain into fine white flour, had he not a fair damsel of a daughter who delighted to handle the flour, this flour identically which —— and I were eating. Time would fail me to tell of the visions of deliciously daisied and butter-cupped grassy slopes, with kine feeding and rosy lassies milking them, and boy-sweethearts wooing these same milkers at the gloaming,—time, I say, forbids me to speak of the

visions suggested by the butter and the accompanying cream. And then the grinning, dusky faces conjured up by the sugar, which of course was raised

'Down in de cane-brake
Close by de mill.'

It was no wonder the waiter thought we were taking an unconscionable time to settle what he, poor fellow, only considered a tart. And no wonder he looked so relieved when at last we rose and retired to the smoking saloon, whither we ordered two foaming tankards to follow us, and which eventually did follow us even down to the resting-place of the chop and the beef and the potatoes, and the bread and the salt, and the sauces and the seasonings and the pickles, and the ketchup and the fine flour aforesaid, and the cream and the sugar, and the, etc., etc., in fact the dinner — for we thought, and lo! we had dined! Bruce, we had dined! As a background to this, imagine two fellows sitting grim, assiduous, anatomical, bone-discovering, over potatoes and salt herrings."

One of the influences of his early life, which to the end affected him most powerfully, was the Ballad poetry of Scotland, with which he had become familiar even before his school-days on the Border. His love for the Ballads grew with advancing years. In his Saturday walks into the country with his fellow-students, he would often spend hours at a time repeating them and discussing the various readings of Scott, Motherwell, Aytoun, and other editors. He

had an old friend in Edinburgh whose tastes in this particular were kindred with his own. They had both learned the Ballads orally, but Davidson had the Roxburghshire "reading," while his friend was accustomed to contend for the version current in his native district of Selkirk. Their discussions were always amicable, and generally ended in their agreeing that children should be brought up on the Shorter Catechism, the Psalms of David, and plenty of Border Ballads. It was not only the poetry, but the music of the ballads that had a charm for Davidson. A fellow-student says — "When I knew him he lodged in Barony Street, and on approaching his room I used to hear him giving voice to some Scotch song, frequently one of the Border ballads, according to the ancient music." Another testifies—"Old Scotch airs had a great fascination for him. There was an old volume, I do not know where he had fallen in with it, that for a long time he was constantly crooning over. Weird songs and weird airs were always coming in his way. He once sung in my father's company the song of Meg Merrilees over the departing soul of the Bandit, and was afterwards intensely vexed when he heard that the old man could not raise his spirits for days in consequence." This love for the Ballad music of his native district influenced him powerfully in many ways. It found an echo in his own verses. The most of the pieces which he composed during his student course were little more than reproductions of the old poetry which had filled his

ear. One who knew and loved him well says, that at that period "he was nothing more than a *singer*, composing little pieces of Scotch verse, in the true poetic vein certainly, but still at best an echo of older Scottish poets. His own culture was, perhaps studiously, kept in the background: he attempted no more than a wandering vagrant did in 'Ower the muir amang the heather.' These verslets he sang to familiar tunes to the great delight of us all. At the same time, he was so keen in all his mental perceptions, so calm and well-balanced that he was evidently fitted for much higher things."

It will be easily understood that one so full of enthusiasm for Scottish poetry and Scottish song soon became a centre of attraction to his fellow-students. The benefits of University life are not limited to the instruction derived from attendance on college classes. It is indeed questionable whether in many cases association with fellow-students does not count for more as an educational influence than the most stimulating lectures delivered from the professor's chair. When young men of kindred tastes, and fired with the same enthusiasms, meet together daily in each other's rooms, or in their walks around the city, and discuss the books they are reading and the subjects that are occupying their thoughts, their minds are quickened and their views are broadened as they never could be by isolated study. It is a special advantage that in our Universities men destined for different professions, and even for commercial life, meet together on com-

mon ground, and pass through the same curriculum of arts. It cannot be asserted that the members of our learned professions in Scotland are free from the influence of "Idols of the cave," but it is certain that they are freer than they would be if their training were from the first more strictly professional, and if they had not the memory through after life of intercourse with men whose paths in later years have been widely divergent from their own. Among the men who were drawn into association with Davidson, there was a special variety. One of them says—"Among those who had a strong affection for him you might see the orthodox and heretical, the methodical and disorderly, the poetic and prosaic; and I am puzzled to say which liked him most." But while thus showing the many-sidedness of his nature by maintaining friendly intercourse with men whose common affinity with him never brought them together, he became the centre of a little coterie of kindred spirits who, about the third year of his University course, formed themselves into a society or order, under a quaint and curious name, the origin of which is obscure. "How the order was established," one of its members says, "I do not know. It grew rather than was made. Each member had his name and his office. One was Metaphysician, another Hellenist, another Physician, another Physicist, and Davidson Poet Laureate—the Physician being also Recorder, but the records were always a myth. From the time that the order fairly came into being, each one was known among ourselves only by his orderial

name, and the conversation always turned on orderial subjects. Every investigation had to be carried on by the brother to whose department it belonged, and it was a high offence for any one to give an opinion on any subject unless he presided over that department. . . . The orderial connection was kept up in correspondence long after the company was dispersed."

It is probable that his growing popularity among the students interfered to some extent with his application to the proper work of the University. It is certain that he did not maintain throughout his career as a student that enthusiasm for class-work which had made him as a school-boy impatient of the vacancy in the Jedburgh Academy, yet he worked up to the average in the routine of the classes, and in most of them he held a higher than average place. Whenever the subject in hand accorded in any measure with the natural bent of his mind, he applied himself heartily to it. Classical study was sufficiently congenial to make him work well when he was in attendance on the Latin and Greek classes; but even then it was only when the exercises called forth his poetic faculty that he came to the front. He had no enthusiasm for mathematics, and in mental philosophy even the memory of Sir William Hamilton, which still lingered about the College courts, failed to stimulate him to great exertion. But he was not intellectually idle. He read constantly, though miscellaneously. He ransacked the shelves of

the college library, and acquired a vast knowledge of English literature. He knew Wordsworth almost by heart; he was familiar with Chaucer and Spenser, and no one in search of a quotation from Shakespeare ever applied to him in vain. He was specially fond of the lyrics interspersed through the dramas of the great master. He had set the most of them to music, and was accustomed to sing them. His letters of this period are full of references to books. One example may be given, as illustrative of his attitude towards subjects of prescribed study:—"I am happy to see that you like Tennyson. I have just been reading the *Princess* with redoubled gusto. It doesn't require so much study as *In Memoriam;* in fact, the perusal of the latter I consider to be about as good a course of mental exercise as the study of all Whately or Dugald Stewart." As might have been expected, when he came, in the last session of his Arts curriculum, to the class of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, he found himself thoroughly at home. Not only was the subject congenial, but Professor Aytoun, who then adorned the chair, was a man whose tastes and favourite pursuits were such as to command Davidson's special sympathy. The author of the *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers* and of *Bothwell*, and the editor of the *Ballads of Scotland*, was a professor for whom he was likely to do his best. His exercises in prose and verse—many of which he carefully preserved—were written with great care, and have Aytoun's hearty

commendation inscribed on them. Toward the close of the session the subject for a prize poem was prescribed, and Davidson produced his "Ariadne at Naxos." It was the result of earnest and painstaking study, and will be read with interest as not only revealing much poetical power, but as an evidence that, though not a plodder in class-work, he was in the truest sense a scholar who had brought himself into thorough sympathy with the spirit of the ancient classics :—

ARIADNE AT NAXOS.

I.

HIGH upon the Hill of Drios,
As the day began to waken,
All alone sate Ariadne,
Watching, weary, and forsaken:
With her dark dishevelled tresses,
Dank with dew-drops of the night,
And her face all wan and haggard,
Still she waited on the height;
Watching, praying that the morning
Might reveal her love returning
Swiftly o'er the quivering water,—
To the lonely isle returning,
And the King's deserted Daughter.

II.

From her couch of Orient forests—
From the chambers of her rest—

Came with queenly step the Morning,
Journeying onward to the West:
And the glory of her presence
Tinged the sea and filled the air,
Smote the lofty Hill of Drios
And the lonely watcher there;
Yet no bark across the water
Came to lighten her despair.
But with sighing of the pine-trees
In the low wind gently shaken,
All day long, in mournful snatches,
Rose the plaint of Ariadne,
Watching, weary, and forsaken.

III.

"In vain! in vain! The seventh bright day
Is breaking o'er yon eastern land,
That 'mid the light—a long dark band—
Lies dim and shadowy far away;
And still from morn till eve I've scanned
That weary sea from strand to strand,
To mark his sail against the spray.
In vain! in vain! The morning ray
Shows not his bark 'mid all the seas,
Tho' I can trace from where I stand
All the flowery Cyclades.

"Seven days! But oh! how tardily
These lonely hours have crept away!
And yet it seems but yesterday
That, sailing o'er the Cretan sea,
I watch'd the melting shadows grey,
And hailed the dawn as emblem gay

Of all the rapture yet to be,
When I with him should wander free
Thro' fair Ilissus' bowers of green.
But now, my love has gone for aye,
And I am left alone away,
To brood o'er all that might have been!

Oh! had I to the shadows passed
Before the fair-haired Stranger came
To light with love the fatal flame
That aye will burn within my breast!
The maids of Crete had named my name,
Nor thought of love,—nor yet of shame;
But of a sister pure and chaste,
In death's cold arms untimely press'd,
And all from joy and sorrow reft:
He might have lived his life of fame,
And I had ne'er been loved and left.

"Or had the North Wind woke from sleep,
As with our dark sails all outspread,
Across the southern wave we fled,
Down in the great sea's twilight deep
Some silent grot had been our bed,
Where many a long-haired Nereïd,
With ocean-flowers all garlanded,
Had knelt by our low couch to weep:
But softly o'er the brine the breeze did creep,
Bearing us all too gently on our way,
While I of strong Poseidon prayed
To guard the life I mourn to-day!

"Ye memories of days gone by
Ere clouds of woe began to lower,

When life stretched all so bright before,
And love was warm, and hope was high;—
Of moonlight nights beside the shore
When by the infinite heaven he swore
And every star that gemmed it o'er,
That love like his would never die;—
Unbidden guests of mine adversity!
Dead hopes, and haunting memories of the Past
That cling about my heart for evermore—
Oh! to forget you all, and die, and be at rest!

"For rest alone awaiteth me
Beyond Death's portal dark and grim,
Where Nature whispers that I soon shall be;
For robes of rest I cannot see
Seem folding round each languid limb;
My weary eyes are waxing dim;
Scarce may I hear the evening hymn
The birds are chaunting joyously.
But oh! for one more glimpse of thee
Theseus! before mine eyelids sink for aye—
Or of thy sail beneath the western day,
O'er the horizon's utmost rim,
Looming far away!"

IV.

Darkness o'er land and sea resumed her sway,
The fair moon rose dispensing silvery light,
And softly fell the tears of Mother Night
O'er the outwearied watcher where she lay,
Till in the Orient dawned again the day,
And all for joy o'er his triumphant birth
Arose the hymnëd praises of the earth:

The Rivers murmured rolling on their way,
The wind-swept Forests sighed, and carols gay
The wild birds lilted from the dewy brake—
But Ariadne sleeps, and never more shall wake!

Davidson was successful in winning only the second place in the competition, but the poem, which was zealously passed from hand to hand, served to establish, among his fellow-students, his poetical reputation, which had been growing through all his course. It was written in the spring of 1859. At the beginning of the following year the *Cornhill Magazine* was started under the editorship of Thackeray. The event excited widespread interest among the reading public. There was natural curiosity to see how the great novelist and essayist would demean himself as the conductor of a monthly serial. The appreciation of the worth of their fellow-student's performance was so enthusiastic on the part of Davidson's friends that one of them sent his "Ariadne" to Thackeray. He did so without the knowledge of the author, who would certainly have shrunk from so bold a step. Davidson's astonishment was unfeigned when the proof-sheet was sent to him for correction. The poem appeared in the number of the magazine for December, 1860, with an illustrative engraving, and occupying a place of honour. The gratification of the young author in seeing his verses so worthily introduced to public notice was soon followed by the honest pride of having earned his first literary honorarium. A wel-

come remittance of ten guineas was sent to him, and was valued, not only because it was no mean addition to the slender income of a student, but because it was a substantial token of the estimate in which the unsought contribution of a nameless man was held by the distinguished editor. Davidson took the success he had thus achieved very quietly. He shrank from any reference made to it by comparative strangers, but in his correspondence with intimate friends he acknowledges how deeply he was gratified. "I hug myself," he says, "on the honour done to 'Ariadne' by the great pains which have evidently been bestowed on the illustration." To another friend he writes: "I was glad you appreciated the merits of the asylum in which my poor unprotected female has at last found a refuge—not a bad stroke for Flame [his 'orderial' name], think you? But you did not give your opinion of the illustration. You must do that next time." The hônour done their associate was very highly appreciated by all the circle of Davidson's college friends. They were naturally proud that their estimate of his poetical ability was endorsed by one so well qualified to judge. They sounded his praises far and wide, and his acquaintance was eagerly sought by other students. Though naturally reserved, he was, to those who were admitted to his friendship, the most charming of companions. His intimate knowledge of books, and the habit of close observation of the men and women whom he met, which came through his wide sympathy with every phase of

human character, made his conversation always interesting. He had a quick eye for the ludicrous side of life. Incidents which others would have failed to notice, were treasured in his memory, and supplied him with an unfailing fund of stories of which his friends never wearied. Yet there was no bitterness in his humour. He looked at peculiarities of character with kindly eye.

By the time "Ariadne" was published, Davidson had completed his curriculum of Arts, and entered on the study of Theology. He left the University in the spring of 1859. He had not written his name very conspicuously on the honour list of his Alma Mater, but he finished his college career with credit, and his memory will long be cherished by his contemporaries as that of one of the most truly cultured men it has been their privilege to know.

CHAPTER III.

The Student of Theology.

DAVIDSON had early formed the resolution to consecrate his powers to the Christian ministry in connection with the Church of his fathers. In such a family as that to which he belonged, the pulpit is the destination naturally thought of for a young man who has shown an aptitude for intellectual pursuits. There is hardly any sacrifice which an intelligent Scottish peasant would not willingly make for the honour of giving a son to the service of the Church he loves. But Davidson had a higher motive for seeking to enter the ranks of the Christian ministry than to please his parents, or to find a convenient sphere for the cultivation of his literary tastes. He was not given to speak of his motives. His natural reserve made it specially distasteful to him to reveal his deepest feelings; but all who knew him were aware that he was a man of sterling Christian principle, and that in aspiring to the position of a Christian teacher he had the highest and the purest aims. The Rev. Robert Douglas of Otter-

burn, than whom no one enjoyed his confidence more fully, says—"The tone of his piety was in unison with his entire character. He was free from all sectarian narrowness, at once liberal and just in his views; mere party spirit could not seize his soul, which instinctively drew to itself what was human and permanent. His piety betrayed nothing that was impulsive or ostentatious, and was slow of discovering itself otherwise than in the purity of life and excellence of character which only a hidden connection with the Divine source of all goodness could impart or sustain."

In Davidson's time, and, indeed, till quite recently, the Theological course prescribed by the United Presbyterian Church for candidates for the ministry consisted of attendance on five autumnal sessions at the Divinity Hall, and a series of inter-sessional examinations by the Presbyteries in whose bounds the students resided. Every entrant to the Hall was then—before the institution of a Central Board—required to undergo a preliminary examination by his Presbytery on the subjects he had studied during his Arts curriculum. This examination Davidson passed in the summer of 1859, before the Presbytery of Melrose. On 9th July he wrote to one of the "order" a most humorous description of the ordeal, describing the fear and trembling with which he walked across the hills to Melrose. He parodies an old ballad "in a manner whose uncouthness and barbarism were only warranted or excused by the

distressing nature of the circumstances, in which he was placed":—

> "As Flame cam' doon by the Eildon Hill,
> He gaed wi' dool and sorrow,
> Till doon i' the Church he spied sax learnit men,
> That had come to pruive his lore, O."

He tells of his sorrow "as he beheld (longa ordine) a mass of problems in algebraic fractions, surds, and equations which some infatuated minister of the Gospel had drawn up for the special behoof of a poor unfortunate who took no pleasure therein whatever—nay, to whom they were the very thing his soul abhorred:" of his joy when "the Priest, probably seeing some external signs, such, for example, as the facial elongation and lower javial depression which take place on such occasions, relieved Flame finally by exclaiming, 'Never mind the algebra! let's go on to the geometry.' This was music to the ears of the overwhelmed Laureate, who performed the remaining part of the trial in a manner to satisfy the whole assembly. Time would fail me to go into details concerning the rest. Suffice it to say that the vote was taken and the Presbytery was unanimously in favour of the Laureate, who inwardly ejaculated, 'I applaud 'the sentiment.' He left the house—he recrossed the hills—he came home—and—it was done!"

In the beginning of August he went to Edinburgh, going by way of Lochmaben, to which town he walked from Ancrum, in company with Mr. Scott—the dis-

tance being some 54 miles. On the way from Lochmaben to Lockerbie Railway Station he was overtaken by a thunderstorm and thoroughly drenched. He travelled to Edinburgh in his wet clothes, and Mr. Scott believes that this was the beginning of his long illness. It was many weeks before he was well, and he was always afterwards very susceptible of cold. His experience as a student of Theology began on the 2nd August, 1859. "I saw a great many old friends at the opening lecture to-day, which Dr. Eadie delivered to a very large audience. The subject of it was the 'Second Advent,' but I didn't hear it well. However, I heard him quote Kingsley's *Alton Locke* with approbation, the part where Sandy MacKay expatiates on the poetry of low life—the *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* which you may see in every hovel. Tell it in the parish school, publish it in Elliot's seminary at Lochmaben!" The band of old friends who had been his College companions was soon enlarged by the additions of new friends from other Universities, who, attracted by his poetical fame, sought his acquaintance. He became the acknowledged centre of a circle of genial and right-hearted men, most of whom now occupy positions of honour and usefulness in the Church, and all of whom cherish his memory as one of their most sacred possessions.

It does not appear that Davidson gave himself with much enthusiasm to the work of the Divinity Hall. He had no special taste for the study of scientific theology, and the short and hurried session did not

give sufficient opportunity for establishing any bond of sympathy between him and the able and genial men who occupied the professors' chairs. He did not fail, however, to acquire a competent knowledge of the great questions of Biblical criticism, and of the facts and principles of ecclesiastical history, and even in the region of dogmatic theology it was not uncommon for his fellow-students to appeal to him in their perplexities with regard to this or that doctrine about which they were in doubt, and in such cases he never failed to make the doctrine in question the subject of special study. Even if it did not deeply interest his own mind, his brotherly concern for the friends he loved was motive sufficient. Whenever he did thus apply himself to the earnest study of any department of dogma, he revealed a power which, had he been spared to occupy a position in the Church, would have made him an able exponent and defender of the catholic faith.

At the close of his first Hall session he, "not wishing to eat the bread of idleness any longer," went to Forres to succeed Mr. George Douglas in the position of assistant in the Academy, and tutor to the boarders in the house of Mr. Berwick, the Rector. It was characteristic of him that he shrank from the responsibility even of this humble position. He went almost by compulsion, fearing that Mr. Berwick would be disappointed in him. His fears were groundless. At the distance of sixteen years the memory of the two years he spent in Forres is tenderly cherished by Mr.

Berwick and his family, by several of his pupils, by those friends in the town whom he visited occasionally, and specially by his minister, Mr. Watson, who says: "He lives in my memory as a tall, erect, slender young man, with hair and complexion exceedingly fair. His forehead was lofty. Rest, reflection, and deep meaning were in his eye. His aspect and bearing were those of natural refinement. He had soul as well as intellect. I liked to feel his presence in the Sanctuary services, and an occasional evening spent with him in our manse was no ordinary pleasure. On these occasions his natural reserve passed off in part, and gleams of wit and imagination began to appear. His reserve was the fruit of modesty, and not of conscious superiority, and seems to have become less as his experience increased." His life in Forres will be best illustrated by extracts from his correspondence :—

To DR. WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *October, 15th, 1859.*

. . . . One of the first welcomes to this approximation to the *Ultima Thule,* I received from your letter, which I found awaiting me. "Verily," saith Flame, "my brother hath been before me."

Well, Javius, here I am *teaching* Now, you suppose that you know the meaning of that word. With all deference to your extensive reading, your great knowledge, your etc., etc., I beg most respectfully to assure you that you do no such thing. You know nothing about the vexation of communicating the mysteries of number to an epitome who

stares you in the face with large eyes, and expresses his conviction, in spite of common sense and what he deems a much more important thing—the multiplication table—that 5 times 3 are 10, and 5 times 9 are 19. You know nothing, Javius, of the internal commotion one feels when his zeal in the communication of knowledge is suddenly checked by some wretched essence of staring stupidity, who looks him in the face, and gravely tells him that f-o-x spells *cat!!* There is no room for imagination in teaching. I can assure you, Javius, you must never speak of an abstract idea, or a notion, or an opinion, or a conception—far less of objective and subjective. You must only speak of things that are as material and plain and palpable as the proverbial pike-staff, or (rather) the penitential strap. You must never speak of the winds that blow through the realms of history: you must only speak of the straws and feathers that show which way those winds are driving; never of the troubled sea of human life collectively, but only of the waifs and the wrecks and the broken staves that lie strewn along its shores. Now all this is vexatious and teasing and cramping enough. A teacher is always in prison, his nature is in chains, and the business of his life is to be a hopeless unstriving captive. He must always live for a pattern or an example, and you know what sort of living that must be. That appears, to me at least, to be the state of the case; a theory liable to two objections; I am prejudiced against the business, and I have had little or no experience. Take my advice, however, Javius, and thank God you are not a teacher.

After all, I like Forres very well; the consciousness of independence gives life a smack which for me it never had before: for there is a real pleasure in being able to say, as you put your butter on your bread—"I have bought this bread and I have bought this butter; *ergo*, I have a right to eat them both. . . ."

To Mr. Scott.

FORRES, *November 12, 1859.*

. . . . Do write immediately and tell me how you are getting on. I can appreciate and reciprocate, too, the desolate portion of your letter; and many a deep sigh do I heave over the memories of winter nights by old Charlotte's fire (small though it was and in spite of the *brick*); over social scenes not easily forgotten, and over the *cracks* that we so often used to enjoy. Alas! alas!! I'm well off here, however, and like it capitally; am well worked, well fed, and *pretty* well slept; and that reminds me that it is "late, late, late on a Saturday nicht," and that I have still to shave.

To the Same.

FORRES, *December 17th, 1859.*

'Tis almost Christmas again, a fact which reminds me rather mournfully of the same season a year ago. I say rather mournfully, for though Forres is a fine, quiet, and even snug little place, I cannot but envy you the privilege you enjoy of passing your holidays in the midst of kinsmen in the "dearest spot of earth." You say I will no doubt think of the jolly night or two we spent last New Year. I have remembered them, and that most vividly, and how do I wish that the present year I could live them over again. No doubt, as you say yourself, you cannot look forward to such a prospect; but I only wish I could get alongside of you once more on the journey homewards. Fact is, I do feel dreadfully home-sick now and then: it appears to be a part of my very nature, and I take a kind of delight in cherishing the frailty—if frailty it be. Scarcely a night passes that I do not lie awake a while for the

very purpose of brooding over other days and other scenes and "old familiar faces," calling up in imagination many a well-remembered Border landscape, many a joyous hour that I can never have repeated in the north. For since we parted at the Waverley Station I have not seen one *kent* face, friend or foe, gentle or simple. I just wish I could spend my Christmas with you south of the Forth, were it even Middlem or the top of Ruberslaw. However, as such a thing is not to be thought of, I must sit me down in contentment, or at least resignation, in the town of Forres, and read my Hebrew Bible, and take things as they come. . . .

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *17th December, 1859.*

. . . . We are in the midst of another snow storm, six inches deep "as far as the eye can reach," and a good deal further I expect. These hills of Ross and Caithness appear to be a perfect laboratory of that potent old chemist, John Frost; for I don't think they have ever been entirely free from snow since I had the happiness to settle down in these parts. . . . I am still getting on pretty well and tolerably smoothly too, with exception of a small teapot storm now and then, and a squabble or two with —— and —— [two of the boarders]. . . . Since I wrote you I have been twice out, one of the times at Springfield, and the other at Mrs. Sclanders. At the latter place I met Mr. Carruthers of the *Inverness Courier*, a famous *litterateur*, whom we heard deliver a fine lecture the same evening. Unfortunately, I was seized with one of my fits of abstraction, and unable to rouse myself. I sat dreaming of the south and of the days of other years, and scarcely spoke a word the whole evening. Goose!!

It was while he was at Forres that Davidson had his first experience of inter-sessional examinations by the Presbytery. His letters are full of references to these, of exaggerated groanings when they were impending, and humorous descriptions of them when they were over. With regard to these examinations, Mr. Watson says, "In his appearances before the Presbytery, he only once, so far as I remember, did himself full justice. That was in an 'Exercise with additions' on Hebrews I, 3, 'Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,' etc. In this discourse, which may never have been finished, he put forth his strength, and that to some purpose. With a masterly hand he grasped the leading points of the passage, and presented them in their mutual relations in language of great force and beauty. The discourse was full of unction and power. On other occasions there were manifestations of the same high order of ability. Nor can we wonder that he should not always have done justice to his powers, when we remember that in addition to six hours of daily school work he had tutorial duties in the evening, and only a limited fund of physical energy."

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *January 3, 1860.*

"I wish you a happy new year, and many happy returns of the season." This is the last of our holidays; therefore

if you find this an ill-natured epistle, lay the blame on circumstances and "Presbytery gripes." Admirable designation! And don't I feel them too? Oh horror! The 17th, George, Monday fortnight, and only one verse of Hebrew read! You ask for a treatise on Nosology recognising the said gripes as a real and true disease. I don't exactly know of such a work: but this I know, if any one contemplating the compilation of a treatise is desirous of falling in with an exemplifying subject, I am the man. Oh, the ever-present aye-overshadowing cloud, big with overhaulings and questions unanswerable, that hangs over the coming weeks! Oh, the writhings of consciousness and memory to be swallowed up of their opposites! Oh, the diaphragmatic sensations that occur *mal-a-propos* in the midst of some season of unsubstantial repose and frail unexpectancy! . . . Where did they examine you in the Hebrew? was it in the first chapter given? and were they strict with Dick and Calvin? Write soon and tell me, for any sake.

To the Same.

FORRES, *January 18th, 1860.*

I've passed! Yesterday was the eventful day, and with its dawn, be assured, came many misgivings, many fears, and many tremblings. Nevertheless I, Flame, arose, and girded up my loins, and, resolving to play the man, went to Elgin. There was I introduced to the old men, there was I overhauled. . . . There did I pass with credit, and there, even in the dwelling of the Rev. Adam Lind, did I feed. So it ended, and thereafter we departed, each man to his tent, I, Flame, hugging myself. I am delighted with your proposal about *Macmillan*. I have seen one of the numbers, the first, which I have in my possession, it

having been sent me by a friend. I should like to subscribe by all means.

To the Same.

FORRES, *February 14th, 1860.*

. . . . During the space of one hour for four days a week, I teach a young man who has begun to turn his attention and his studies to the ministry. Of course this deprives me of one of my own hours, so that my private store of leisure is very considerably curtailed. . . . I was truly glad to hear of Robert's success. "He'll be a credit till us a'." I shall remit some day for *Macmillan*, which meantime I expect eagerly. . . ."

To MR. SCOTT.

FORRES, *April 2nd, 1860.*

If you knew my situation, you would not wonder at my silence. Industry is ever silent, my dear boy. Set that up as a maxim of Thomas, preacher that is to be, and you will presently find that all my offences are hidden under the lee of it. In other words, more directly and less philosophically (hence philosophy is sometimes a lady to be kept in the background)—more directly and less philosophically, I say, I have been so busy that I have had scarcely time to put pen to paper, save in the way of cleek-and-porridge-stick-making. We have two examinations per annum here; one by the Presbytery, the other magisterial. The former of these came off the other day, and of course, being a new man, I had to make every possible exertion to show evidence of my efficiency. Hence for the last month I have been drilling, cramming, re-drilling and re-cramming these

epitomes with as great a knowledge cargo as they could possibly sail under. The result was a complete success: the fellows behaved splendidly. Oh, had you seen Flame laying it off, rod in hand and book in head, before the Provost, and the priests and scribes and elders of the people. How eloquent he was on the grand moral and physical moulding forces of English History! how *au fait* —how great on the physical structure and the geographico-political conditions of Europe!! . . . I was glad to learn that Tom is firmly settled in the south: it will hold our old social fabric together, whose joists and kebars we apprehended were about to go down straightway to dust and dissolution. I am heartily glad at the prospect of continued intercourse amid old scenes and associations. Teviot and Ale and Jed, and Eildon and Ancrum, are not yet doomed to be merely rich in memories: to me those names still summon up days and scenes of enjoyment hoped for—not yet gone down to the ungenerous past. I don't know how it is that I think so much of that same irreparable Past; but somehow the physical distance makes me cling to and nestle among the old memories. . . . By the way, I had almost forgotten to speak about the Revivals. The movement has reached our port—Findhorn, a village of 1,000 inhabitants, among whom there are already 170 to 200 cases of deep conviction of sin. For some days the work of the school there (the one I wished for Mat.) could not be carried on. The excitement broke out among the boys, and that still more remarkably than among the adults —40 cases among them. The teacher, named Lee, for the last two years at the Normal, Moray House, has been very active in the work, and has aided the minister very much. I thoroughly believe in the genuineness of it all: it is the most remarkable event in the history of Christianity since Pentecost.

To the Same.

FORRES, *April 21st, 1860.*

I'm in want of a *Waddington* [the handbook of Church History then prescribed for Presbyterial examination]. You'll be able to get me one second-hand . . . . only be quick for all sakes and my sake. Quick, quick, quick!

To the Same.

FORRES, *May 9th, 1860.*

The book came all safe to hand, and I feel much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken in the matter. Oh, how hard reading it is! Dust is a *cactus* to it—(you're a botanist, and know what a cactus is). I have scarcely been able to settle more than a score of pages—how to finish the rest and the Homily "I find not." Finished, however, they must be. I have not much spare time here; but, as I have never enjoyed the privilege of real employment hitherto, I find the being busy a wonderful luxury, as well as a wonderful soother of the conscience. No idle man has an easy conscience, though he may be a comparatively sinless person in other respects. I've felt this in my own experience.

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *May 9th, 1860.*

I lately had an epistle from Javius, containing about the most valuable possible aphorism for poor souls in such condition as I am at present. It is from Carlyle (Javius thinks: *I* think, however, it must be from some of the lost treatises of Solomon the son of David). Here it is: "Great is the

Majesty of Silence." I forgot to write it in half-text; but it deserves characters of gold. Don't you think so yourself? It is something so comfortable to a lazy rascal (Flame, *e. g.?*) to reflect that the longer he is in answering a letter, the higher is the tower of majesty he builds for himself! . . . I'm in a mortal fit of "Presbytery gripes" again. In fact, I'm afraid to ask when they meet. We have had a dreadful row with —— [one of the boarders], which has kept us all in hot water for some time. . . . I wish I could have said that I have been passing my spare hours as pleasantly as yourself. Daisies and buttercups here are still comparative strangers. Recently, however, we have experienced a delightful change of weather, and the buds which had been so long imprisoned by the cold have all at once burst out and poured a flood of verdure over the whole earth—(I mean round about of course, hyperbole). I am longing for the *Idylls*. I should have asked you to send them, were it not that I have *lashed myself* to *Waddington* and the Homily. What would you advise me to read up for Natural Philosophy before the Presbytery. It will soon be the examination, and then, then, Hurrah for the right side of the Forth!—

> "For I was reared among the hills,
> Within a Border home."—*Bothwell.*

The sender of the aphorism referred to in the foregoing letter—Dr. William Douglas—had been thus addressed :—

FORRES, *May 5th, 1860.*

"Great is the Majesty of Silence." Oh, silent man! Oh, high and mighty physician! Oh, holder of a creed whose apostles and prophets are "dumb dogs that do not bark,"

whose perfect men are deaf mutes, whose "better land" is like "Dreamland, which is a silent land, and all the dwellers in it are deaf and dumb!" (Prof. Wilson). And if there be any other name that I can address thee by, let mine exhaustion be mine apology for the omission of it, for the length of the apostrophe hath taken away my breath. Javius, thy motto in the hands of an ambitious man had been a dangerous one. Might not I, Flame, on the strength of the aphorism, have built me an high tower of silence-born majesty in like manner, whose top might have risen and risen "by the process of the suns" until it "reached unto heaven." But I, Flame, am a man of lowly tastes, delighting not in heights and in far-off pinnacles of majesty; but loving rather the valleys and the nooks and the solitudes of life. Thomas Gray described me long ago, Javius, and he found me in a country churchyard. Listen to him—

> "Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
> His sober wishes never learned to stray:
> Along the cool sequestered vale of life
> He kept the noiseless tenor of his way."

That's Flame. My character is old-fashioned, and somewhat common-place withal; for there have been multitudes of Flames in all ages. . . .

To MR. SCOTT.

FORRES, *June 4th, 1860.*

. . . . I had been going on quietly with *Waddington*, and thinking now and then of my text, but not making any serious push in the matter, the fact being that I did not know when the Presbytery met, and that I was almost afraid to ask. Imagine my consternation when Mr. Watson

called one fine Wednesday afternoon, hoping that I was prepared, etc., etc., as the Presbytery met on the following Tuesday, and there wouldn't be another meeting till I was beyond the Grampians. I stated the case despairingly, and was recommended to do what I could within the appointed time, and it should be seen "what could be done." . . . Accordingly, on the Tuesday I presented myself chokeful of Church History and the doctrine of levers (!)—sat patiently some four or five hours—heard three sermons—fed—heard other three sermons—was besought to go my way for this time, and when they had a more convenient season they should call for me—consented and vanished. Fortunately the Gaelic Church of Inverness wished to call a minister, and a meeting was therefore appointed to be held on that day month in the Capital of the Highlands. There I am to preach my maiden sermon. Oh, happy Gaelic Church of Inverness! I am now busy grinding it up, and, hech sirs, its dreich darg I find it. Besides, there is another subject on which I havn't seen one syllable, and the book is not to be heard of in the neighbourhood, Davidson's *Hermeneutics*. Perhaps Fyfe could get it out of the Library, and I will be responsible. It's only a fortnight to the time, so picture my condition—

> "Oh, pity Thomas and remede
> That stayed is in perplexity."

. . . . On Saturday we had a most delightful excursion to a place called Craigellachie, away up Strathspey, where we had a most delightful ramble. We were accompanied by about three score necessary evils, of whom, however, we saw nothing saving for about twenty minutes to lunch. You may imagine how much I enjoyed it. A week ago, too, we were up the Findhorn—where there is scenery to which I have hitherto seen nothing else approaching;

banks from 200 to 300 feet high sheer over, and the river away below, tumbling and foaming over immense rocks that strew its channel.

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *June 21st, 1860.*

"I have been and gone and done it." I mean I have preached my first sermon—not at Inverness, but at Nairn, to which pretty little place I went by rail the other morning. As I was rather early I went away out the road a good way, struck down a small path to the banks of the Nairn, and there having sat me down under a clump of alders refreshed myself on *Waddington*, of which I there got up anew all that I intended to treat them to. After having walked about Nairn and gone round the high towers thereof, to tell and consider her palaces, I found myself at the direction of a civil man, who takes a great deal of snuff, entering the dreaded precincts of the finest U. P. Church I have seen hereabout, or I daresay any other where either. The menagerie had already been let loose, and the bone of contention the famous Inverness case. . . . All day long they higgled and haggled over this, poor Flame meanwhile sitting brimful of a sermon which he was painfully conscious was gradually oozing out of him. It was now 3.30 and the Presbyterial feed was at 4; Flame was therefore posted in the pillory after having been "straitly charged" to "engage in prayer very shortly." With much fear and trembling —the "strong men bowing themselves" the while—I got through much better than I had anticipated. The criticism now commenced. . . . The text was Matt. xx, 28, and I was taken to task by —— for not having taken my introduction from the context—the beautiful context, viz., the washing of the disciples' feet! If you find it there give

me notice. —— thought the division not a very happy one, but on coming to go over the heads he found he did not know what the division was, and had to be refreshed on the subject by ——. —— "Approve the discourse. It's four o'clock!" I'll tell you more of it when we meet to dwell together in Edinburgh.

Davidson's next letter bears a heading which in the after years became very familiar to all his friends. In the spring of 1860 his father left Woodhead and abandoned the shepherd life. Seeking an occupation more suited to his advancing years, he settled at Bankend on the Jed Water, close to the town of Jedburgh, where he leased a little holding, consisting of an orchard and some fields. To this new home Davidson came on his first return from Forres. It was such a home as he would himself have chosen, beside the county town that was the metropolis of the pleasant district, whose bounds the family had never left in all their removals from Oxnam to Kale, from Kale back to Oxnam, and from Oxnam to the banks of Ale, and yet sufficiently far from the bustle of the market place to suit the taste of one given to solitary musings. There are few finer country towns than Jedburgh. It is rich with memories of Saxon times when Ecgred of Lindisfarne built the little settlement by the stream; of the feudal ages when armies mustered in the forest and raised the war-cry "Jethart's here," when kings kept court in the castle, and the monks of St. Quintin said masses in the abbey; of the later days when Ministers of State

watched by the bed where Queen Mary lay nigh to death with the sickness to which she looked back regretfully when gathering sorrows wrung from her the cry, "Would that I had died at Jedburgh," and when the Earl of Dunbar administered "Jethart justice" to the Border rievers; of the earlier and more recent years when Samuel Rutherford and the author of *The Seasons* learned their letters in the Grammar School, and when young David Brewster lounged in the workshop where James Veitch was making his telescopes. The town lies in a valley through which a gentle stream winds its way under great cliffs of Old Red Sandstone—the rich vermilion tint of which contrasts finely with the green of the waving trees that crown and fringe them. It is surrounded with orchards whose produce has won a name in far off cities, whose spring blossomings scent the air and enrich the landscape, and whose autumn fruits combine with the corn-fields of the encircling slopes to gladden the heart with a sense of fulness and beauty. There is just enough of modern industry to give to the town that air of snugness and comfort which good wages bring to a frugal population, and not enough to darken the air or defile the streams.

If there are grander residences about Jedburgh, there are certainly none more beautifully situated than Bankend. Below the Anna—an open piece of green holm-land on the left bank of the Jed—where in the early days of "The Relief" vast crowds of worshippers from far and near used to assemble to

celebrate the communion and listen to the commanding voice of the younger Boston — the stream is bounded for some two or three hundred yards by an Old Red Sandstone cliff, which rises perpendicularly to a great height from the very edge of the water, with stray trees or bushes of the plantation which waves on its summit keeping their hold on its precipitous sides. In a snug corner at the lower end of this cliff the house stands with its gable to the water, the steep but now slightly sloping bank rising up at the other end. On the holm in front of the house, between the river and the gradually receding bank, the orchard is planted. Within the orchard there is a pleasant path along the foot of the bank and following its curve, which was Tom's favourite resort when he became too weak for longer walks. This path terminates at a hedge which bounds the orchard, and separates it from a still widening holm of cultivated land that stretches down the stream to the high road and the Railway Station. On the other side a more beaten path runs from the house to the wooden bridge that crosses the stream and leads to the town. In the middle of the orchard, and at its lower boundary, there are two sycamores of stately proportions and graceful outline that, with their wealth of dark leaves, form a fine contrast to the lighter foliage of the fruit trees. In the seasons of flower and fruit the place looks like a nook in fairyland, and the romance is not broken but rather deepened by the fact, that from across the water there

comes the subdued hum of the machinery of a woollen mill. Altogether it seems an ideal residence for a poet who would bring his dreamings of the past and his communings with nature into relation with the activities and the burden-bearings of to-day.

To DR. WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

BANKEND, JEDBURGH, *13th July, 1860.*

. . . . I now find myself once more in the "pleasant places" wherein "the lines fell" to me originally, viz., the banks of the Jed—a "goodly heritage," too, for we have got a fine large orchard of some 150 trees, and berries beyond calculation. Here I have been vegetating for a week, and now find my roots struck to such a depth as to enable me to maintain a condition of considerable serenity and stillness. The berries are just ripening, and this consideration will in no small degree add to the attractiveness of the place. But we may seek for pleasure as we will, I have not found it even yet. It's too delicate a plant for sublunary soils, and belongs, I fear, to the herbarium of another world than this. The prospect of a mess of Hebrew and Greek, salted with Biblical criticism, and peppered with exegetical theology, never fails to reveal itself in all its pungency as the suggested and fore-shadowed and typified after-reality of my rural feasts of strawberries and cream. . . .

During his second session at the Divinity Hall, of the prospect of which he speaks so playfully, he was the fellow-lodger of George Douglas, the "Plucius" of the "order," and at its close he returned to his work at Forres. It is probable that renewed intercourse with his fellow-students in Edinburgh had reawakened

his poetical faculty, which seems to have slumbered, or at least to have had no noteworthy outcome, amid the hard work and "Presbytery gripes" of his first year in the north. Immediately after his return he began to sing once more, and it is evident that disuse had not marred the sweetness of his music.

To DR. WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *October 26th, 1860.*

. . . . I have to inform you that the Flame has been stirred up within the last few days, and the result has been a certain spark, a scintillation, in short, an *emanation*, to use the orderial phrase—the which I do enclose for your recorderial verdict. It's altogether in a new vein, as you will see; in fact, it's a song. Now, read it carefully. I have enclosed it in a sealed envelope, in order that I may lecture you on the subject before letting you loose upon it. A song, as I take it, ought to consist of one idea, of course varied in view, in mode of presentation, and so on; but, after all, one idea. Of course I mean main idea; for *one* idea literally would be neither more nor less than just harping on the same string—just humbug. One idea must have a number of others to rest upon—more than one, look you—for if it were one idea on another one, why the one, it stands to reason, would be as big as the other, and so you would have *two* main ideas. Well, then, one main idea resting on several others—two or more—but more, at all events, than one. No doubt, as you may think, and as I think too, everything in the literary line must have one idea—everything from an epic like *Paradise Lost* down to an epitaph on a chimney-sweep. But in the *song* I think the distinctive feature is, that the main idea never must be permitted to drop or slide out of sight; it must always be visible—a

visible thing—the visible thing. It must rest on the subordinate ones—being above them as the seat of a chair is above the legs of it. Well, this song of mine consists of one idea, resting upon others—more than one—viz., two, which, I take it, gives it at all events simplicity. There's nothing transcendental about it. Well, these two are gathered both up into one again in the last verse (and there are only three), wherein the whole thing may be considered as concentrated. Now, Javius, there's a lecture for you. I am almost afraid to revise the two pages over which it extends, for I have an impression that it will appear great stuff. But it's what I have been thinking for the last ten minutes. So, now just read the thing. I am afraid you will have conjured up some stupendous idea from the stuff I have been speaking as an introduction to it—sounding of trumpets, as it were—montes parturiunt et nascitur—What! O son of Æsculapius? a *mus*? Now, give me your real opinion of it. To say truth, I like it a little myself, but don't let that have anything to do with your verdict, which I request you will give me as soon as possible. . . .

Within the sealed envelope the song was found, with the instruction written on it, "Read it very slowly," and the N.B., "I have just named it after the timber, as that is the only name I can think of." It is here given as slightly amended, in a letter dated a few weeks later:—

THE AULD ASH TREE.

THERE grows an ash by my bour door,
And a' its boughs are buskit braw
In fairest weeds o' simmer green,
And birds sit singing on them a'.

But cease your sangs, ye blithesome birds,
An' o' your liltin' let me be;
Ye bring deid simmers frae their graves
To weary me, to weary me!

There grows an ash by my bour door,
And a' its boughs are clad in snaw;
The ice-drap hings at ilka twig,
And sad the nor' wind soughs thro' a'.
Oh, cease thy mane, thou norlan' wind,
And o' thy wailin' let me be;
Thou brings deid winters frae their graves
To weary me, to weary me!

Oh, I wad fain forget them a';
Remember'd guid but deepens ill,
As gleids o' licht far seen by nicht
Mak' the near mirk but mirker still.
Then silent be, thou dear auld tree—
O' a' thy voices let me be;
They bring the deid years frae their graves
To weary me, to weary me!

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *November 1st, 1860.*

. . . . I had an epistle from Javius about a week ago, which was awfully short, and *argal* could not contain much news. However, he has been buying Carlyle's *Heroes* and *Sartor*. I wish I could come across them here, too. I was sorry I could not finish them in Edinburgh. There's precious little reading here, as you know, for us. The club-books, however, are sometimes interesting. That for the past month

was Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*—a most enchanting book. I read it, however, some four years ago. Begin and read it if ever you come across it. . . . I have been writing a song, for which Mr. Johnstone is going to compose a tune. Perhaps I may enclose a copy for you herewith, if I can be bothered to write one out for your criticism.

To the Same.

FORRES, *November 23rd, 1860.*

. . . . I have been twice asked to preach since I came here—both times at Burghead. "I begged to decline" in both cases, having nothing presentable. However, in case I should again be called upon, I am going to write a popular discourse as soon as I can. I am much obliged for your criticism of the "Ash Tree," but I have been thinking it over, and I cannot just see how the third verse contains any remark outside the idea of the song; but of course I may be wrong, and you may be right for all that. However, I have got the judgment of one whom both of us, I think, consider very competent to estimate a thing of the kind. I had the impudence to enclose it with a few explanatory sentences to no less a person than the author of what I consider to be your best song, viz., "Scotland's Hills"—in short, I sent it to Henry Scott Riddell, and I have had a long and flattering epistle from him, which I will send you to read by and by. I set no small store by it. Here are the opening words of it:—"I received your letter of date 30th October, enclosing your song of the 'Ash Tree' with much pleasure, and I regret that circumstances have conspired to prevent me from acknowledging it sooner. The song, according to my thought and feeling in regard to it, breathes the true spirit of simple Scottish song. This kind of poetry I have often thought is, unless to him who naturally possesses the genius

to produce it, the most difficult of all others," etc., etc. Don't you think that something worth while now.

He then goes on to ask Mr. Douglas—as he asks his brother William in a letter of the same date—to subscribe, and get others to subscribe, for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Glens*, which Mr. Scott Riddel was then proposing to publish. He thus urges his request:—

"Except Ballantyne, I know of no other poet at the present time who is doing anything to keep alive our dear old traditional style of song; so I think we who profess to have a love for the poetry of our own land, and a love, too, for our own distinct nationality, with the preservation of which that poetry has so much to do, ought to do all that lies in our power, little though that may be, to get a hearing for the good old minstrel man, now that he has struck his "guid auld harp ance mair."

To DR. WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *January 12th, 1861.*

. . . . I beg to inform you of a curious physiologico-psychological fact. *You don't know you're born yet.* If you were Flame you would. Imagine a poor fellow labouring hard six hours a day in public, and two in private, and living the rest of the time in character of model and example to the rising generation. Does he eat? then he must eat in a model way. Does he drink? the potatory habits of a dozen immortalities are dependent in part on the manner in which he drains his tumbler. Does he go to bed? then he must doff his raiment with the last degree of circumspection. Does he sleep? then let him in sleep be on his good

behaviour; let him snore not, or if he does snore, then let him snore genteelly. Does he get out of bed? then let his rising up be after the manner of a Lord Chesterfield. Does he wash himself? then let him perform his ablutions daintily, deftly, dapperly—in short, to perfection. Does he?—but you're tired, and so am I. In fact, a man's always in harness, he can never lay aside the pedagogue. . . .

The rest of the letter treats of the illustration to "Ariadne," which had then appeared in the *Cornhill.*

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *February 14th, 1861.*

. . . . The Cardross case is kicking up an immense deal of *stour*—choking the throats of every poor wight who ventures to open a Scotch newspaper for the time being. I hear we are to have a meeting here, too, on the subject. I'm on the Free Church side for once. What do you "go in for?" I've got an instalment of *Macmillan* within the last few days, and am getting a rare revel just now. Behind all, however, hangs my sermon, suggesting itself unceasingly, and of course with the usual amount of unpleasant anticipations, not to mention present brain-cudgelling—in short, I've a downright attack of "Presbytery gripes," and I need say no more. You recollect last August "rehearsals," I've no doubt. . . .

To DR. WILLIAM DOUGLAS.

FORRES, *March, 16th, 1861.*

. . . . I was before the Presbytery the other day giving them a sermon, for which I got no end of praise from the priests, with the exception of one, who thought there was rather a *lack of Catechism* (the phrase is mine, but that's the

gist of his exceptions). What think you of Flame's discourse being lauded for it's "originality" (by the carper, too), for its "sententiousness," for being "sparkling and yet profound." I have had thoughts of writing a commentary on the four Gospels ever since! . . . I have been thinking on the subject of "Hero" for some time, with the view of making a rhyme out of it, but as yet have made little or no progress.

A letter from a fellow-student, who wrote to him stating his difficulties on the doctrine of the Imputation of Adam's sin, supplied Davidson with quite a different subject to "think over." He wrote two letters in reply, one more hurriedly and the other more deliberately. "The Second Epistle Polemical," as he named it, is given here, as it may interest some readers to see the manner in which the student grappled with one of the hard questions of Theology.

FORRES, *April 20th, 1861.*

You have no doubt been wondering at my delay in answering your last letter, or rather the one before that. I intended to write you long before this time, but as my exegesis for the Presbytery has been on my hands up till Tuesday last, I was unable to think over the matter so clearly as I wished to do before writing you again about it. I have got that fired off with some *éclat*, and am now therefore entirely free from all Presbytery grievances. My examinations, too, are all over: so you may envy my condition considerably. The next thing to trouble me and interrupt this quiescent phase of existence will be my sermon for the Hall, but that I intend to keep in the

background for some time to come yet, and thus prolong the season of calm as much as possible. Within the last few days I have been thinking over the O. S. difficulty pretty closely, and we have talked it over and discussed it in every possible relation in which it presented itself to us, and I have just come to the same conclusion as before. I may as well re-state the case as it struck me formerly, and as I set it down in my first letter to you on the subject, more especially as you take exception to one of the points I there stated. Well, then, let us suppose that Adam's sin is not imputed to us, in other words, that we were not regarded as sinning in Adam's first transgression. Nevertheless, we all enter into life burdened with an evil nature, a nature tainted with sinfulness, and which will inevitably lead thence to sorrow. Now that we are burdened with such a nature as this—the possession of such a nature as this I take to be a punishment; I can't look upon it in any other way. This, however, you deny. Well, let us look at the thing. Here is, at all events, an evil thing, a thing out of which good cannot come, a thing which by an inevitable law will develop itself to a still greater evil, and bring sorrow and suffering upon the possessor of it, as certainly as shadow follows substance. Being evil in itself, it is an evil to the possessor. And can you imagine that it can have been inflicted for no reason? You may say, "Such is the will of God;" but that is just the "damnable" dogma of some of the old schoolmen—(Ockham or somebody, I forget their names)—who held that a thing was right because it was the will of God—if God could be imagined as enjoining murder, theft, and adultery, and pronouncing them virtues, then virtues they are. Now here is a thing which we try by all the light God has given us, by the intellectual faculties and the moral principles God has endowed us with, and we find it to go directly in the

teeth of them all: are we not therefore to conclude that it must be wrong? An evil thing is inflicted upon a living soul, and yet that soul was guiltless in the sight of God. Imagine you see the angel Michael to-day in his full glory and purity; to-morrow you meet him with an evil nature like that of man. Would you not inevitably ask what he had been guilty of in the interval? In other words, would you not, by a law of your nature, instantly recognise in his condition all the elements of punishment? I therefore consider our fallen nature a punishment, and I can't help it. Now I think it quite legitimate to ask, "Why are we punished, being innocent?" This is not the place to apply the Apostle's words, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" That question belongs to a higher inquiry—one that approaches still nearer—one, indeed, that goes actually within the precincts of that secrecy which is "holy unto the Lord"—and one which I will indicate when I get far enough on. To bring out in a clearer light the extent to which the evil in man's nature reaches, by punishment, let us take the case of infants. Infants, we shall say, possess this evil nature; and I will by and bye notice that question too. Well, it is on account of this sin that they die. This death is part of the punishment for sin. But, if they thus incur part of the punishment, why not the whole? Why not death spiritual and eternal, as well as temporal? Now, just suppose (what must be the case but for the grace of God in Christ manifested to them, it may be, in intuitions or dying revelations, we don't know), that any individual infant were actually to experience the punishment in its fullest extent—imagine that the first conscious experience of a living being—its first experience of existence, and its only one, too—were the sensation of ineffable suffering, which was to be without an end. Could you really contemplate such an event without believing in

your inmost soul that there was a cause for it—a cause why this being had been so burdened with such a nature—guilt, in short, which stamps the fate as a punishment. Every evil in this world is in a sense punishment. We get nothing but what we deserve in that way. All this, however, is only my own defence of the position that the nature we possess is a punishment. I have not yet noticed your objection to it. This objection is embodied in the terms of a sentence which I shall quote. You say—"Is not our corrupt nature itself, plainly a punishment? I think not; no more a punishment to us, than it was for Adam to have a nature that was capable of sinning, and not at the same time to have Divine grace communicated unto him in such a manner as that he might be kept in his first estate like the angels in heaven." That is the sentence. That implies that since Adam's fallible nature was not a punishment, our fallen nature is not to be considered so either. This takes for granted, you will observe, that the two things are the same, which they certainly are not. Adam's nature was sufficient by its own inherent constitution to abstain from sin, and thus keep beyond the reach of evil either actively or passively. Our fallen nature is really such that we can't do a purely good action. The best action ever done by Socrates or Plato was imperfect in its goodnes, had an admixture of evil in it, in that it was not done to the glory of God, or for some other "sufficient reason." This nature of ours is such, too, that we can't keep beyond the reach of punishment, which follows sin as surely, it may be not as swiftly, as explosion follows the contact of gunpowder and fire. Is there not, then, a very sensible, an infinite distance betwêen the two cases—such a distance as entirely precludes the possibility of arguing from the one to the other in almost any particular. Now, if you will just think over that, I am sure you will acknowledge the reasonableness of what I have said about your objection.

Adam's nature, to state the thing again, was such that there was a perfect possibility of doing good and being good; ours is such that it is perfectly impossible for us either to be good or do good. I said I should also notice your infant theory. You say they die for their own sin. By this you *seem* to mean—and, indeed, you *say* you mean—their actual sin. A child (to put your theory in the strongest and broadest possible way)—a child may die the very instant it receives its life, or at all events, the very next instant. Actual sin, therefore, must begin with its life—living must be sinning. Now, I think that this really and truly is just an utter impossibility. Can there be law without knowledge? The moral law is just God's will. This will, no doubt, is written on the human heart to a certain extent. But, granting that, can the unborn infant read it? The first, the indispensable condition of knowledge, subjectively, is CONSCIOUSNESS. How can the child break the law, unless it knows it, or (to make the "law of the Lord, which is exceeding broad," as broad as possible) has it in its power to know it? And how can the infant have knowledge, or power or capacity of knowledge, without consciousness? It cannot. And, besides, such a period is recognised in the Bible in the words of God Himself: "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good," Isaiah vii. 16. Now, this refers to Christ, and is for that very reason all the stronger for the purpose for which I have quoted it. Well, you see, notwithstanding this want of knowledge, the child is punished for possessing this evil nature—and for nothing else as far as itself is concerned—and what stronger proof have we of the fact of this nature being a punishment? And can there be punishment without previous guilt? and at what conjuncture can you imagine the whole human race to have participated in guilt excepting as represented in Adam, and viewed as sinning in him? I think, too, there is trace of

imputation and representation in the Bible. "Levi," says Paul (I quote from memory only), "paid tithes in the loins of Abraham." Besides, in saying that we are not looked upon as having sinned in Adam, you strike at the foundation of the whole covenant of works, or at least you entirely thrust out the human family at large from being represented parties in that transaction. You limit the offence entirely to Adam—to Adam also you must, in consistency, limit the consequences—I use the word in its widest sense—whether good or bad. Of course there is a stage beyond that. It may be asked—why were we represented in Adam? why did God put Adam for us? This is the place, I conceive, to apply the rebuke of Paul: "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?"

But in addition to all this, I think you must fall back upon the verse itself in which you say the doctrine is not—and I say it is—contained. The strongest of these, to my mind, is 1 Cor. xv. 22, "As (ὥσπερ) in Adam all die, so (οὕτω καὶ) in Christ shall all be made alive." Now I stand up for the extent of the parallelism to its very fullest. I think there is reason for this in the strength and seemingly premeditated precision of the terms of comparison used by the Apostle. If you limit the force of the ὥσπερ ... οὕτω καὶ, you open up a field of endless doubt and disputation as to the locality through which the line of demarcation ought to pass, and as to the particulars it ought to include, and the others which it ought to shut out. I think there is sufficient cause to take it in its fullest extent. Why not? The reasons against it being so taken are—so far as I can see—few indeed. One of them is of course just the question we are discussing. As to this, I have already given you my views on the subject in the preceding pages of this *farrago*, and also the reasons by which I consider it is fully warranted. That objection, then, I may consider

settled for my part. There is just another objection to the comparison being taken in the fulness of its extent, which I will notice here, and which is the only additional one of any plausibility which has suggested itself to me, or to any one else I know of. The two members of the comparison stand to one another in the relation of exact opposites—you will know what I mean by that, so I shan't stop to say anything about it here. Well. If there is *demerit* in man, as the offspring of Adam, there must be *merit* in the Christian. At first sight, this will seem a very valid objection; but let us look at it. The essence of the believer's relation to the Redeemer lies in his being one with Him. The Christian is often spoken of as being "in Christ." Now, though as considered in himself the Christian has no merit whatever, yet in Christ he has Christ's merits: and so, I conceive, the difficulty is obviated. "In Adam all die," "in Christ all are made alive." In Adam there is death, in Christ there is life. In Adam there is demerit, in Christ there is merit—out of Adam there is no demerit, then (so far as this matter is concerned) out of Christ there is no merit. This last I put down just as an illustration of the fulness in which the comparison ought to be taken. Well, if you take the parallelism in its fullest extent (to which I see no objection other than our own question at issue, and that which I have now noticed), we must also apply it in the present case. And now I must close. I have inflicted a long epistle upon you, but you have invited it, and therefore I cannot consider myself to blame in the matter. I must say, however, that the discussion, over which I have gone as fairly and fully as I could and as time admitted—not only in my own mind either, but with Mr. Berwick too, which is a very much better way of managing the matter—this discussion has done me a very great deal of good, has led me to think much more closely and much

more clearly on the subject than I ever did before, and has led me to entertain views on the question which, if not more correct, are at least much more firmly and satisfactorily fixed in my mind than those which I formerly held. And now, just consider how anxiously I shall await your next epistle, and do, in all conscience, let it be an early one. Also, don't be very severe upon the structural defects of this *treatise*, which I scarcely dare to revise either, but the materials of which have been a good while in my head, and a good deal discussed too, so that any improvements I could make would only be in the way of arrangement or expression. You have my settled convictions on the subject, and the reasons for which I hold them, whatever you may think of them or the way in which they are put.

P.S.—You will be glad to hear that your friend, Tom Ker, was admitted to the fellowship of the Church to-day by Mr. Watson.

At the summer vacation of 1861, Davidson bade farewell to Forres. He liked the place and the friends with whom he was associated there, but his work was burdensome; it left him too little time for study, or even for general reading. After his third session at the Hall, he found employment in Edinburgh as assistant in Dr. Douglas' School. The engagement, which lasted for two years, with some hours of private teaching, gave him the means of support till he was licensed. The great advantage of the change was that he had more spare time, and that it was entirely at his own command. He had also the stimulus of intercourse with fellow-students of congenial tastes.

In the winter of 1861-2 he lodged with Mr. Elliot and Mr. Gibson, afterwards of Auchterarder—"Christianity-in-its-relation-to-Politics Gibson," as Davidson called him, to distinguish him from another friend of the same name. In the following winter George and Robert Douglas were his companions, and after George was licensed, early in the spring of 1863, Robert and he lived alone.

Early in this period of winter residence in Edinburgh, Davidson formed another association, which was destined to exercise a powerful influence on his future. In the sister of one of his fellow-students he found a companion of kindred tastes, who cared for the books in which he delighted, and shared his enthusiasm for poetry and for music. All through his wanderings as a probationer, and during the long years of trouble, he wrote his weekly letter,* and the letter which he received in reply was one of the joys that lightened his darkness. In this attachment he found a new motive for intellectual activity.

To this and the other influences that have been noted may be ascribed the fact that the latter half of his theological course was more fruitful of literary work than the period spent in Forres. Early in 1862 he took a short excursion to Fife in company with Mr. Elliot and Mr. White. After his return he

* The author has gratefully to acknowledge his obligation to this correspondent for the use of a MS. volume containing some extracts from such letters as were likely to prove of interest to the general reader, and were needful for the completeness of the work; also for the stanzas of Davidson's latest poem.

wrote a song, the reading of which on these pages will recall to his fellow-students many a pleasant night when, in their social gatherings, they heard his well-remembered voice singing :—

MYSPIE'S DEN.

BLITHE hae I been in Myspie's Den,
Blithe hae I been in Falkland Ha';
The bours o' Kiel I lo'e them weel,
But Leven Links are best o' a'.
O blithe hae I been, etc.

Oh, cule is the shade in Myspie's Den,
An' the sun shines fair on Falkland Ha';
But the mune that blinks on Leven Links
Has charms for me abune them a'.
O blithe hae I been, etc.

Oh, it's saft croons the burn in Myspie's Den,
An' the wind sighs low round Falkland Ha';
But there's a voice by the Leven Links
Has wiled my vera heart awa'.
O blithe hae I been, etc.

Oh, the brier blooms bonny in Myspie's Den,
An' the roses red by Falkland Ha';
But there are lips by the Leven Links
I trow are sweeter than them a'.
O blithe hae I been, etc.

A visit to his beloved Border-land, at the close of

summer in the same year, suggested to him the Reverie which, in its original form, he named "Upon the Hills," but which, when revised and slightly altered in 1868, he designated—

ON THE CHEVIOTS:

A REVERIE AT THE END OF SUMMER.

ONCE more, once more upon the hills!
No more the splendour quivering bright,
Which finger laid at summer height
Upon the lips of half the rills,
Pours on them, but the year's most mellow light.
Far through yon opening of the vale,
Upon the slopes of Teviotdale,
The green has ta'en a fainter tinge;
It is the time when flowers grow old,
And summer trims her mantle fringe
With stray threads of autumnal gold.

The west wind blows from Liddesdale;
And as I sit—between the springs
Of Bowmont and of Cayle—
To my half-listening ear it brings
All floating voices of the hill—
The hum of bees in heather bells,
And bleatings from the distant fells,
The curlew's whistle far and shrill,
And babblings of the restless rill
That hastes to leave its lone hill-side,
And hurries on to sleep in Till,
Or join the tremulous flow of Teviot's sunny tide.

It has not changed, the old hill tune!
And marks that years in me have wrought
Fade as its low familiar croon
Wakens by turns full many a thought,
And many an olden fancy brought
From glooms of long oblivion;
Forlornest fragments torn and strewn
Of drèams which I have dreamed at noon,
Long since, when Summer led a fairer June,
And wealthier autumns spread the slopes,
And younger heart nursed larger hopes
Of bounties that the years should bring,
Nor dreamed of all the care and all the warfaring.

Oh, western wind, so soft and low,
Long-lingering by furze and fern,
Rise! From thy wing the languor throw,
And by the marge of mountain tarn,
By rushy brook, and lonely cairn,
Thy thousand bugles take, and blow
A wilder music up the fells!
Thy whispered spells—
About my heart I feel them twined;
And all the landscape far around
'Neath their still strength lies thrall'd and bound;
The sluggard clouds, the loitering streams,
And all the hills are dreaming dreams,
And I, too, dream with them, O western wind!

**

This morn I thought to linger here
Till fall of evening and the dew—
To think some fresher thought perchance, or rear
Old hopes in forms and colours new;

Then homeward by the burn-side wend,
When over Cheviot keen and clear,
The moon look'd down upon the land.
But sad sweet spots hath each lost year—
As ruins have their crevice-flowers
That sprinkle beauty o'er decay;
And I've been sitting hours on hours,
While those old seasons hovering near
Beguiled me of to-day!

I said that they were faded out,
The lines that years in me have wrought.
Alas! there is no hand to smooth
Life's graven record from our brows;
Fate drives us from the fields of youth,
And no returning step allows.
Let me no more, then, with reverted eyes—
Let me no more with covetous sighs,
Gaze at the light which on them lies.
But come, assail me without ruth,
Pains of the life that's still my own!
Crowd out of sight the time that's gone,
Come, living cares; and come, the hour's anxieties!

On his return to Edinburgh from a short spring holiday in 1863, he brought with him this lyric, which he sung to the tune—"There grows a bonnie brier-bush in oor kail-yaird":—

PRIMROSES.

It's far within yon Forest in the spring o' the year,
And deep intil yon glen I pu'd a Primrose for my Dear;

And in amang the buds o' a broon hazel-tree,
It's up there gat a wee bird an' sang a sang to me.
Oh the Spring-time it comes an' the Primroses blaw,
An' saft young hearts Love wiles them awa';
But sune and ere the Simmer the Primroses decay,
An wae's me for Love that it blumes but a day!

Oh it's deep within yon Wildwood an' doon beside yon brae,
I thocht on what the wee bird sang, an' thocht till I was wae;
But out frae 'mang the leaves o' the green Ivie,
It's up there gat a gaucie Merle an' liltit to me.
Oh the Primroses blume an' the Primroses fade,
But green the Woodbine grows in shine and in shade;
And there be true hearts where Love downa die,
Then leeze thee on the Lassie that's aye leal to thee!

His short visit home in July of the same year, between the close of the school and the opening of his last session at the Hall, resulted in the composition of a lyric, to a tune of which he was very fond, "The Blacksmiths of Cologne," written or arranged by Stephen Glover:—

JEDWATER.

YESTREEN I roamed by Jedwater,
When the sun was set and the dew was doun,
An' there was a sang in Jedwater,
An' my Ailie's name was it's tune.
It sang o' her een, it sang o' her hair,
An' it sang o' her neck o' the lily fine;

But aye the sweetest it sang o' her heart,
My Ailie's heart that is mine!

It's up an' doun by Jedwater
I gaed and listened that ae sweet tune,
O it's up an' doun by Jedwater,
Till it glentit under the mune.
O her deep, deep een! O her dark, dark hair!
And her lip that is red as the bluid-red wine!
But sing, sweet River, sing aye of her heart—
My Ailie's heart that is mine!

Meanwhile Davidson was working faithfully as a student. His exercises and sermons for Hall and Presbytery—most of which have been preserved—bear marks of extensive general reading and of careful thought. There is no evidence that he was in any large measure embued with the spirit of speculation which in these days has taken hold of students of theology. He seems to have been content to accept the system of belief authorised by the Church to whose ministry he aspired, but he accepted it in a Catholic spirit. He was incapable of understanding why minute doctrinal divergence should produce alienation between Christian men. It was natural that his sympathies should be much more with that side of Christian truth which lies toward his favourite region of poetry and art, than with that which lies toward the region of philosophy. His religious life depended less on the letter of Christian doctrine than on the spirit which is breathed by men whose modes

of formulating the truth are far apart. In his essays and discourses he brought his varied culture, his knowledge of literature and his knowledge of history, as well as his own experience of human life, to bear on the illustration of the truth he was called to set forth. His style was always severely correct, and sometimes it was terse and pointed. There are not awanting fine gleams of poetic fancy and passages of rare beauty. All these qualities of thought and style are found in a sermon on Rom. i. 16—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"—which he delivered before the Presbytery of Edinburgh in March, 1863. The reception which this sermon met with at the hands of the Presbytery is truly astonishing. It was torn to pieces by hostile criticism, and was ultimately rejected. The reader of it looks in vain for anything to justify so extreme—and, happily—so rare, an exercise of Presbyterial prerogative. It is amazing that in a court, some of whose members were able and scholarly, no one was found to direct the attention of his brethren to the deep spiritual tone of the discourse, and to the quite exceptional—though necessarily undeveloped—power which it reveals. Davidson felt the treatment to which he was subjected very keenly, but, according to his wont, he was able to extract amusement even from his trial. He composed a doggerel verse, beginning, "Woe's me that I rejected am," which he used to sing to the tune Coleshill. He wrote a description of

the meeting to Mr. Bruce, giving little sketches of his various critics, and of their depreciatory remarks. The letter has, unfortunately, been destroyed, but in many a gathering of his friends in the west it was read with much enjoyment. There was no trace of bitterness in its tone, unless indeed that is to be found in his reference to one young presbyter—who had been his fellow-student, and who, with questionable taste, had spoken with special severity of the preacher and his sermon. He wrote of him a memorable sentence, which has been preserved: "Bruce, I have broken bread with this man; I have cracked jokes with him, though, to tell you the truth, I had generally to act as both legs of the nut-cracker myself. Well, this man ——, even he has lifted up his heel against me."

His letters at this period are comparatively rare, and none of those that have been preserved are specially noteworthy. They are occupied for the most part with hurried, but always humorous, accounts of the ongoings of the circle of student friends in Edinburgh, with shorter references to his own work, and with fuller pictures of some holiday excursions into the country. He was in the midst of his chosen friends, and was not impelled, as in Forres and during later years of isolation, to make up by regular and careful correspondence for the lack of nearer fellowship.

One of his letters to Mr. George Douglas contains the following note, which fitly closes the record of his student life:—"Yesterday, Feb. 2, 1864, I was licensed!"

CHAPTER IV.

The Probationer.

THE position of the probationer in the Presbyterian Church corresponds in some particulars to that of the deacon under the Episcopal order. He is authorised to preach, but not to dispense the sacraments. His office is avowedly transitional; he only holds it till he obtains a title to higher dignity. But there is this distinction, the probationer is not "in orders;" he has not received the rite of ordination; the title Rev. is only given to him by courtesy, and never in official documents; he wears the pulpit gown, but not the bands; he is not regarded as having attained the office of the ministry, but as being only a probationer for that office. In the Established and Free Churches he generally obtains, as soon as he is licensed, an appointment as assistant or missionary to some clergyman, whose parochial or congregational duties he shares. While occupying this position, he is on the outlook for vacant churches, in which he tries to get a "hearing," in the hope that his gifts may commend

themselves to the electoral body in some congregation, and that thus he may attain the coveted position of an ordained minister. This arrangement has the obvious advantage of introducing a young man from the first to the practical duties of his profession, and of giving him the benefit of intimate association with one who has had experience of these duties. But, on the other hand, it has this disadvantage, that it gives him no regular opportunity of appearing as a candidate in vacant pulpits. If he has left college with a high reputation this is of little moment, for then his services are eagerly sought by congregational leaders and members of "committees of supply," but if unambitious of academic fame, or unable to attain it, he has occupied an average position, his chance of admission to vacancies is dependent largely on the private influence he can command, or on his abilty to commend himself to the men of authority whose advice is sought by congregational patrons.

In the United Presbyterian Church a different arrangement prevails. Immediately after license, the name of each preacher is placed on an authorised list of probationers—"the list," as it is familiarly called in denominational parlance—which is under the control of a small select Committee of Distribution. This Committee is charged with the duty of apportioning the vacant churches among the preachers, giving to each as many appointments for the quarter as the relation between the number of vacancies and the number of preachers will allow. The attempt is fairly made to

balance unavoidable inequalities in the appointments of one quarter, by giving to the man whose lot it has been to preach in isolated districts and in poorer charges, his next appointments in larger and more central churches. The almost mechanical fairness of this arrangement is only interfered with when vacant churches take advantage of the privilege allowed them of asking a "hearing" of any preachers—not more than two in each quarter—of whose names and abilities they have received information. The same Committee is charged with the duty of sending the preachers, when they are not employed in the vacancies, to occupy the pulpits of ministers who may require their services. The preachers are remunerated for their work by payment for each Sabbath according to a fixed rate, corresponding to the amount of the stipend paid by the church in which they preach. They are also entitled to a week's board: lodgings are provided for them in the vacancies, while in settled charges they are inmates of the manse.

These details, which it is necessary to give to make many passages in Davidson's letters intelligible, will show that the probationer has in the United Presbyterian Church a better defined position than in the other denominations. He is a recognised institution. He receives as a right, and never begs as a favour his opportunities of obtaining preferment. If there are restrictions to which he is bound to submit, there are compensating privileges which he is entitled to claim. The chief drawback to the arrangement is that it

inevitably leads congregations to judge of men too exclusively by their pulpit gifts. Inquiries into scholarly attainments and general ability are not so common as in the other churches. There is not the same opportunity for men of high culture, who lack to some extent the power of effective utterance, attaining a position where their gifts can be used for the general good of the Church.

There is an air of romance about the wandering life to which the United Presbyterian probationer is at once introduced. He is sent east and west, north and south, at the bidding of the Committee. He sees new cities, and unexplored districts of country become familiar to him. He has large opportunities of acquainting himself with various men and various manners. In his frequent journeyings he meets the commercial traveller and the tourist. He can study human nature in its manifold peculiarities as illustrated in the eldership and the beadleship of the churches where he preaches. He enjoys social intercourse in the pleasant manses where from time to time he sojourns, and he has plenty of time for solitary reflection in the lodgings to which he is consigned in outlying stations and in vacant charges.

In former days, the first equipment for his work which the probationer had to provide on receiving license, was a horse, on which he rode from church to church, with his sermons and changes of raiment packed in his saddle-bags. He was then more warmly welcomed than, perhaps, he is now, when he arrived

at some country manse to which newspapers seldom penetrated, bringing with him tidings of what was going on in Church and State—and it was in those days reckoned a special sign of grace to be kind to the preacher's horse. If he had no appointment for the Sabbath following his engagement, he was generally welcome to prolong his stay beyond the period when his legal right to bed and board came to an end. He would await the return of the master of the house from the "Sacramental occasion" at which he had been assisting, would ride forth with him on his pastoral visits, and perchance share his pulpit work on Sabbath in return for the extended hospitality. It was only stingy housekeepers who sometimes sought to speed his parting by loudly given orders for a liberal breakfast, "because the preacher, poor lad, had a long journey before him." There are men still living who can remember the probationer of the old school as he rode forth on his thick-set cob, with his powdered wig appearing below his broad-brimmed hat, which generally bore marks of wind and weather; with his Scottish plaid across his shoulders; with knee-breeches, furred stockings, and buckled shoes, and the saddle-bags behind jogging up and down, keeping time to the easy trot by which he rode along. Instances were by no means rare of men who never got beyond the probationary period, but who, having overlived their young ambitions, and having forgotten their pleasant dreams of churches and manses of their own, devoted themselves unmurmuringly to the duties

of the wandering life. They and their horses' were familiar objects on every highway within the bounds of their Presbytery; the men uncovered and the women dropped their curtseys as reverently as to "the minister himsel'." Their slender stock of sermons had been exhausted in every pulpit, but they were none the less welcome at the manse, for they had never failed to alight at some roadside shop to buy "sweeties" for the children; they could talk to the minister of the old student-days at Selkirk, and of the wisdom and learning of Dr. Lawson; and they had gathered in their many journeyings much knowledge invaluable to the house-mother, as to the management of her garden and her cow, and even as to the upbringing and doctoring of her bairns.

The old probationer has disappeared—like so much else that one loves to think of—before the advance of the steam-ship and the railway, but improved means of locomotion have introduced a new element of romance into the preacher's life. He has longer journeyings than of old. He gathers experience over a wider field. His appointments for one quarter may send him here and there among the midland counties of Scotland; in the next he may have to journey to *Ultima Thule*, and find his way over moorland and fen, or across stormy waters, to the different preaching stations in Orkney and Shetland. His next location may be in the Lewis or the Isle of Skye, or he may be sent over to Ireland to minister to the small congregations of the Presbytery that remained apart from

the General Assembly in protest against the *Regium donum.* After fulfilling another set of engagements in Scotland, he may receive orders from the Clerk of the Committee to cross the Border and exercise his gifts among the congregations in England, which till recently were an integral part of the United Presbyterian Church, and which still remain in close federal relation to it. When the period of probation is short, there is a charm in this life of extensive travel and ever-varying scene. To a man like Davidson, with a quick eye for peculiarities of character, with a power of adapting himself to circumstances and of deriving positive enjoyment even from hardships, the life on which he entered in the spring of 1864 was in many respects congenial and pleasant.

With characteristic reserve he carefully concealed from his friends where he was to preach his first sermon. He did not venture to preach at all on the first Sabbath after he was licensed, but delayed for a week, because, as he says, in a letter dated February 3rd, 1864, "I have a horrid hesitation in delivery, which I believe is due to imperfect committal, so I'm going in strong for learning one thoroughly, and thus gaining as large a stock of assurance at first as I possibly can." The preacher's first sermon is indeed no ordinary trial. The student has had experience in reading essays in the class-room, in making speeches to debating societies, and even in preaching before his fellow-students and the professor in the Hall, and before the grave and reverend seniors in the Presby-

tery; but when he has for the first time to rise in the midst of a congregation assembled for the worship of God, to conduct their devotions with no prayer-book to read from, and no litany to chant, and to recite verbatim, without the aid of notes, a carefully written sermon, which must at least be half-an-hour in length, and ought to be longer if the lad would begin his career with a sound reputation; when he realises that he is not now delivering an exercise to be criticised, but a solemn message to which simple men and women are listening for their spiritual good; when he looks around him and sees among his audience grey-haired elders whose life-experience has given them deeper insight into the things of God than he himself has attained through all his years of study, it is no wonder that he is overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility. On the whole, Davidson acted wisely when he refused to tell his friends where he was to make his first essay as a preacher of the Gospel. It was desirable that in the trying hour no familiar face should be looking up to disconcert him.

His earliest appointments seem to have been to churches in or near Edinburgh; but in midsummer he received marching orders to find his way across the Minch, to occupy the pulpit of a recently-planted congregation in Stornoway. He began his work there about the longest day, and continued it for five Sundays. It was a pleasant time of year for the first of his distant expeditions, and he seems to have enjoyed it thoroughly. He had there a new experience. A

preacher's earliest sermons are usually those which he has prepared on prescribed texts for Hall or Presbytery. These remnants of his student days, altered and amended to suit popular audiences, had hitherto served Davidson, but his lengthened location in the Lewis exhausted his old material, and he had to begin to write discourses from texts of his own choosing. It is interesting to notice the subjects which suggested themselves to his mind in those long summer days, when he was sojourning by the distant sea. He turned, first of all, most fitly to Psalm civ., and wrote a sermon from the words, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet." In this discourse there are clear traces of his circumstances and surroundings. It opens thus :—

It is not good for a man to be always alone. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so doth the countenance of a man his friend." And yet if it be not good for a man to be always alone, neither is it well for him to be always in company, for it is possible to be alone, and yet not lonely. Sages, we know, thoughtful men, have even found the face of solitude not without charms. Indeed, a thoughtful man is never lonely; even in what we might take to be the hours of utter loneliness—irksome, devoid of all fellowship—his solitude is peopled with thoughts, with memories, with fancies, which are sometimes the best of company. And, indeed, this is a pleasure of which we must all have shared more or less, especially when events rising above the common level of our every-day experience, have left deeper marks than usual upon our minds. To him, for example, who is far from home, what is sweeter than the memory of home scenes, or

the thought of loved faces round the fireside from which he is far distant? . . . But our solitude may be enlivened by other phases of thought than mere memories, which are almost never unalloyed by regret, seldom free from tinges of sadness. We may indulge in other reflections fruitful in more direct and tangible profit. The present and the future lie open to us with the past, and we, in our solitude, must to some extent arrange and anticipate and hope with respect to that which is to come—duties and possibilities—as well as reflect upon that which is past and gone. . . . There is one subject of thought to which we should all yield ourselves at many times, and that more and oftener than any of us all is in the habit of doing. What is fitter to be the companion of our solitude than the thought of God? . . .

The preacher then goes on to speak, I., of calls to meditation of God. Those he finds in nature and experience. He thus closes his illustration of the former of these particulars—

To ourselves everything around us, if we would but listen, is speaking of God. There are the heights about us, tufted with broom, fragrant, golden-tasselled. Are they not the "hills of God?" There, above us, are the unending alternations of day and night, of sunshine and shower and rolling clouds, and, beyond all, the everlasting sky. Shall we look upwards, and not think of God who dwelleth in the heavens? And, there, at our feet, is the ever-moving, yet ever-constant sea, changeless even in change, varying as the forms of His providence, and yet still the same as the mercy that rules them all. Shall it afford us no symbol of eternity, of infinity, of God?

He speaks, II., of the profit of meditation upon God—

It sweetens our cups of sorrow, it strengthens and fences us about in temptation, it solemnizes and sanctifies all our views of life.

He speaks, III., of what sweetens our meditation of God—

It is the gospel of Christ, and the gospel of Christ alone, that gives sweetness to our thoughts of God, and that makes our meditation of Him sweeten in its turn all the changes of life, all the phases of Providence.

He makes practical application of his subject to those who never meditate of God; to those whose meditation of God is bitter; and thus he closes—

Finally, there are some of you whose meditation of God is sweet. To you, also, there is this lesson—if your meditation of God be sweet, meditate of Him all the more.

His other Stornoway subjects were Song of Solomon, ii., 11., "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," etc.; Psalm cxix., 96, "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad;" and Revelation iii., 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," etc. The last of these subjects was suggested to him by Holman Hunt's famous picture, a copy of which hung in a house in Edinburgh over a piano, at which he often stood and sung his favourite airs. He liked this picture, though the face of the Christ did not satisfy him. He was accustomed

to speak of the hopelessness of any attempt to represent that visage which, though it was marred more than any man, was yet fairer than the children of men. He used to say of Ary Scheffer's "Christus Consolator:" "That face was never at Cana of Galilee." He had a special admiration of Titian's "Entombment," which he saw when he was abroad, and Tintoretto's "Crucifixion," with an engraving of which he was familiar, because in both the face is in shadow. He said—"These men were reverent men and humble men; they painted the pictures on holy ground; they had heard the words, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet!'"

While busy with his earliest *con amore* efforts at sermon-making, Davidson was not unobservant of the customs of the people among whom he was sojourning. He thus writes:—

To —— ——.

STORNOWAY, *July, 1864.*

. . . . Last Wednesday I was at the annual Cattle Fair, held here on an undulating moor a mile out of town. It was a fine day for once, and it was rather a good scene. The Celt is too grave a character to make a good fair, however: there wasn't the amount of laughing, sweethearting, shrieking of herds to bewildered collies, nor yet the same amount of "krames" and tents that are absolutely necessary to produce a decent south-country—Lammas, for instance—fair. However, there was a great deal of galloping of wild-eyed, blue-bonnetted or unbonnetted, duddy, dishevelled Gaels, upon furious demented-looking and equally

dishevelled ponies of diminutive stature, long-mained and pot-bellied. And there was a great deal of blue homespun, and Gaelic streamed in all directions. There were two showmen—one with the gigantic title of the "Olympic Arena." The other had "no name," but consisted of waxwork and a piper. He had an intimation (how beautifully Geordie would have read it) hung outside in his own printing, and, more by token, of his own composition. This interesting document was to this effect:—

≣ The. Publec. is. invitted. to. sea. Her. Most. Gracious. Magisty. Queen. Victoriu. in. wax. work. as. large. as. Lif. and. othir. curiosaties. ≣

N.B.—The periods and the flourishes are the showman's. . . . . The most striking feature of the whole fair, however, was the din made by a multitude of male urchins, who flitted about with baskets and shrieked "*Ar-an-Criahe!*" in the extremest and most piercing falsetto. It is pronounced "Ar-an-Cree," and on my appearance, or that of any one with a coat *not* blue, the mystic words were translated into English, and turned out to be "Ginger-bread!" This is a glorious day—quite clear—the sea blue, and the mountains on the mainland quite visible, fringing the horizon, exactly as the hills do in Waller Paton's pictures.

Davidson's next engagements brought him to the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and to renewed intercourse with his friends there. He was then sent to the West of Scotland, where he preached in Glasgow, Millport, and Douglas, and was prevented by stress of weather from fulfilling an appointment at Kirn. When at Douglas he had the opportunity of gratifying the desire, which had been awakened in his boyhood,

of visiting the Falls of Clyde, and also the pleasure of being present at his friend Mr. Bruce's ordination at Wishaw.

To MR. ROBERT DOUGLAS.

GLASGOW, *September 16th, 1864.*

Upon my word, I don't know how to begin. I feel like a man who has stolen a sheep and, with the mutton on his shoulder, meets the owner. That is a slap-dash kind of illustration, from which I hope you will gather that I am pretty much ashamed of myself. I have scarcely written a letter the last quarter of a year, except a few to Jethart announcing my intended arrivals and my actual whereaboutses, so that you must not impute anything like *malice prépense* in the matter. It is simply a case of what somebody has called "*constitutional fatigue.*" Most people, in giving a name to the thing, call it—harshly and coarsely, in my opinion—*downright laziness.* However, I must leave this subject; it is drawing me into too many *italics*, which do look bad and feeble in a letter. To change the subject, then, I have been in Glasgow or its neighbourhood for a whole week. I preached at what a modern Apostle Paul would call a "den or cave of the earth" last Sabbath—a kind of sow-cruive description of a biggin', to wit ———— —a dingy, stoury, moth-eaten, sooty, grimy, fusty, musty, mucky tabernacle: a place of worship that might have suited pretty well the Gibeonites, if that be the name of the tribe with the clouty shoes and the mouldy bread that *sold* Joshua so eminently. In that same burrow I am to preach again on Sabbath; after which I am appointed to Millport. This is a kind of watering-place, "pleasantly situated," I am told, on one of the historic Cumbraes. To this insular people I am expected to minister two days. I am already appointed for the last Sabbath of the present quarter, and

I think it highly probable that my next quarter will begin with the same place. This arrangement, you will observe, does me out of my expected visit to Lockerbie. . . .

The first two weeks of November were spent at home, his appointments being to Border towns in the neighbourhood.

To the REV. JOHN M'INTYRE.

BANKEND, JEDBURGH, *November 9th, 1864.*

. . . . I have had a note from Thomson of Kirn, with reference to my failure to reach his department of the 'vineyard' that Saturday night. He was sorry, of course, but attaches no blame to me in the matter. Moreover, he says he will speak to his congregation about the fee when he gets home—for he is at Moffat invalided—and offers me either of the first two Sabbaths of December. I have written to him expressing my due gratitude, but declining both: because I disdain taking pay in such circumstances, and my engagement near Newcastle on the Sabbaths immediately preceding those in question would necessarily bring me in for a flight all the way from Newcastle to Kirn, and thence again to Portsoy—of all places in the world—a feat of *landlouping* which I am prevented from going in for, both by pecuniary and meteorological considerations—for my finances are low, and the season is winter. I hope you have found your way through that sentence; but such a lengthy journey, or series of journeys, could only be treated of properly in a sentence of corresponding dimensions. I have no news to communicate. My recent journeys have been quite devoid of the misfortunes which usually accompany my motions, and they have therefore been comparatively tame and uninteresting. . . .

To —— ——.

WALKER, *November 21st, 1864.*

. . . . I got to Newcastle on Saturday about one o'clock. and spent the afternoon there looking about me. I enjoyed the trip up Teviot and down Liddesdale and Tyneside greatly. Hexham took my fancy very much, for one of the first, indeed the very first, ballad I ever learnt was the pathetic "Derwentwater's Farewell;" and one of the verses has haunted me ever since, from the beautiful and natural and sad kind of spirit that runs through both meaning and words—

"Albeit that here in London town
It is my fate to die,
Oh carry me to Northumberland,
In my father's grave to lie.
There chant my solemn requiem
In Hexham's holy towers,
And let six maids from fair Tyneside
Scatter my grave with flowers."

I came down to Walker in the evening. Walker is a very smoky, sooty, grimy, muddy place, inhabited, however, by a kindly race of men (women included). In fact the place is all mud together, either in the liquid, betrodden and bechurned form of downright "glaur," or else burnt and dried into the brick state, in which latter it is invariably used by all men who take it into their heads to build houses.

I preached yesterday in the forenoon and in the evening. They have a bad habit of keeping the Sabbath-school bairns altogether in a body in the middle of the chapel in the forenoon—a habit which, I think, is not to edification by any means. A good deal of fun goes on among the little people, and, as a check upon their procedure, a grave and

reverend senior, grey-haired but sharp as a needle, sits as sentinel over them, and, with one eye and ear directed to myself and the other to the youngsters, had altogether a busy time of it. He came in and smoked a pipe with me in the evening, and I was amazed to see that, after all, the good old gentleman does not squint either.

He was destined to accomplish a more remarkable feat of "landlouping" than that to avoid which he had declined Mr. Thomson's offer of December appointments at Kirn. The Distribution Committee had intended his engagement at Walker to be the first of a series among the English vacancies—to which, in fact, he was sent back two months later. But the Home Mission authorities, being in an emergency, applied for his services, and obtained leave to summon him by telegram to go at once to a station which had been opened at Dublin. There, accordingly, we find him.

To —— ——.

DUBLIN, *December 6th, 1864.*

. . . . At Kirkby-Stephen I had an interview with a most renowned and far-famed character. Of all men in the world it was the notable Poet Close! He was standing in the station with a packet of ill-assorted books or pamphlets in the one hand, and a staff in the other—a queer, wild-looking figure, with a most incompatible Highland cloak round his shoulders. He caught me staring at him—of course I couldn't help it—and immediately stepped up and commenced to trade with me for some of the books in his hand. They were, he said, his own works. He both made them

and sold them, and he found it rather hard work. I thought to myself that there might possibly be a third operation connected with them which would be "harder work" still—reading them, to wit. But as I looked at the poet's gray hair and thread-bare clothes and disjasket *tout ensemble*, my heart smote me for ever entertaining a momentary intention of saying it, and I bought his "bookie," which I shall send to Bruce; he is fond of these odd things, and I think on that score it will stand about as high as any of his other acquisitions in that line.

When his work in Dublin was over, he was sent to supply two vacant congregations—Cullybackey and Sixtowns—in the north of Ireland. His experience by the way was memorable, and he used to amuse his friends with the record of his troubles. The journey from Northumberland to Dublin had drawn heavily on the probationer's slender purse, and left him only what was needed for incidental expenses during his stay in the Irish metropolis. He expected that the usual payment by the congregational treasurer would be made before it was necessary for him to set out for the north; but day after day passed, and the bearer of the bag never appeared. At last the Saturday following his last Sunday came round, and, as he was due next day in a pulpit some thirty or forty miles beyond Belfast, and had only five pence left in his purse, it was absolutely necessary that he should overcome his bashfulness and prefer his claim. He accordingly called for the treasurer, who explained to him that, as Dublin was a station specially under the

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charge of the Home Mission Board of the Church, it was by the secretary of that Board in Glasgow that the preacher was paid; but added that he would gladly accommodate him with whatever money he needed. Davidson modestly asked the loan of a pound, and hurried to the railway station. To his disappointment, he found that the train by which he must go carried no third-class passengers. The price of his ticket, therefore, made a sad inroad on the borrowed pound, and, on counting the balance as he rode along, he discovered, to his dismay, that it was not sufficient to carry him to his destination. At Drogheda station he met a young man belonging to the Dublin congregation, to whom he told his plight, asking the loan of five shillings. He continued his journey, congratulating himself that his troubles were over. But on his arrival at Belfast, he found that the last train for Ballymena, the station nearest Cullybackey, had gone. A night in a hotel had not entered into his calculations, but it was now inevitable. He wandered about till he found a house with a "moderate charges look about it." Though he was very hungry, he consoled himself with a pipe, and went to bed supperless. In the morning he ordered a single cup of tea and a slice of bread for breakfast. With "much fear and trembling" he called for his bill. The payment of it left him with eighteen pence less than the fare to Ballymena. He looked about him in his despair, and saw at the other end of the table a most unapproachable looking man, who was breakfasting on "a savoury

mutton chop," the sight of which was tantalising to the hungry probationer. Blushing scarlet, he approached the stranger and told his tale of dool. The stranger, Davidson always remembered with a shudder, gave him "an awfu' glour," thinking, doubtless, he was an impostor; but when he asked for eighteen pence, adding that he would send postage stamps in repayment, the unapproachable man was evidently relieved, and, with great alacrity took out his purse, gave the sum requested, and then turned in haste to his mutton chop, in manifest fear that the demand would be increased. With resources thus replenished, Davidson took the train to Ballymena, but on his arrival there he found that he was several miles from the church where he was to preach, and the hour of service was so near that it was impossible to walk. He hired a car, which brought him to the church door just in time to leap off, and, asking the elder at the plate to settle with the carman, find his way to the pulpit. When he had begun the service, he felt that his hands were wet, and, looking at them, he discovered that in his agitation and shame at having to appear in the guise of a mendicant, he had clenched his fists so tightly, that the nails had cut into the palms. All through his sermon he was haunted with the thought that he must have passed his hand over his face, and besmeared it with blood. On the Monday morning he wrote a letter to the Home Mission Secretary, full of his quaint and curious humour, pointing out mildly the difficulties to which a preacher of moderate income was exposed

through the arrangements which had been adopted as to the payment of the Dublin fee, and indicating that he had blushed so much that only his quite exceptional leanness had saved him from an attack of apoplexy. The letter has unfortunately been destroyed.

When the troubles of the journey were surmounted, he found himself in a pleasant place, with enough to keep him cheerful in the dark winter days far from home.

To —— ——.

MR. KNOWLES', CULLYBACKEY, BALLYMENA,
December 24th, 1864.

I was beginning to think that your letter had gone astray this time *entirely:* it wasn't even a "Sabbath breaker," for I suspect it must have gone to Dublin, or some place equally far out of the way, seeing that all it could say for itself was "Cullybackey, Ireland," which put me in mind of Thomas á Beckett's mother, who set out to seek her lover, though all the English and all the clue to him that she had was "Gilbert" and "London." Lest your next should go the same route, I have written my address in full at the top of this—a precaution, indeed, which I ought to have taken when I last wrote you from Dublin. . . .

Though you might not anticipate it, I am remarkably snug in this out of the way place. Mr. Knowles is a very decent fellow (and so is his wife, as an Irishman would say; indeed, I heard a man in Dublin speak of the "Lady Lord Lieutenant!"), and traces his ancestral line back for two hundred years to one of Cromwell's Ironsides, who, after the sack of Drogheda and other fights stricken in Ireland, finally got his spear transformed into a pruning-hook, or at least got a pruning-hook fixed on the butt-end of it, and settled

down to spend the remainder of his days in tilling Ireland, and restraining the Irish. He had three sons, this Ironside, and from one of these patriarchs descended Sheridan Knowles the dramatist, and my honest landlord from another. In the same person you often find the most incongruous and incompatible trades combined in this queer country, and my worthy friend, Mr. Knowles, is an instance in point, for he is a clerk to a manufacturer in Ballymena, and farmer of a few acres of land, whereon he rears a good crop of flax, oats, and, of course, potatoes. He is, withal, a man of intelligence, and even of no small taste and judgment in literary matters; and there is in the room which I inhabit a very considerable quantity of books of all kinds and classes, "from the lowest A to the highest Euclid;" in fact, from Shakespeare to Jack the Giant Killer, and "The old woman who lived in a shoe and had so many children she didn't know what to do," poor body. Mr. Knowles is not quite so badly cumbered as that old lady, for he has the reasonable quantity of three—Lizzy and Willy and the baby—of whom I don't know whether I like Willy or Lizzy the best. My preference lies between them anyhow. But I daresay I have dwelt rather long upon the subject of Mr. and Mrs. Knowles and their children, not to mention that biographical sketch of the old Cromwellian Ironside to whom remotely I am indebted for so decent a landlord: and so, if it please you, we will change the subject.

Yesterday I spent in ——— on a visit to the Rev. ——— ———. . . . The Rev. ——— ——— is as lively an old gentleman as I ever encountered, barring, of course, the Rev. Thomas Adam of Kirriemuir. He is seventy years old, I should say, and yet he has about him so much of the dew of his youth . . . . that it is quite refreshing to meet him, and quite reconciles a man to the prospect of threescore years and ten personally. When I went in, about 10 am.,

Mr. —— was out attending a Roman Catholic funeral; and I met his wife, who is so much *bothered* running up and down stairs attending to her lodgers that she has adopted the strange and singular expedient of looping up her dress behind by sticking a pin into it! She showed me into his study, the queerest little den you ever saw. It reminded me of the old riddle-definition of an egg that we used to puzzle each other with when we were children, ever so long ago: "A little hoosie weel packit." The "guess" goes on to say, "Neither door nor window at it;" but that part does not apply to the Rev. Mr. ——'s study at all, which has a window, and also a door, with a draught that would "dicht wheat." Mr. —— was a most woundy long time in coming in, and I amused myself with surveying this "little hoosie." It measures exactly 9 feet by 15, and the walls of it are occupied thus: thirty-eight pictures and engravings, two illustrated almanacs, two fiddles, two fiddle-sticks, one banjo, four poems (in frames), one weather-glass, one map, one clock, two book-cases! This is an exact inventory, for I grieve to own that I took down the list on the back of an old envelope with a pencil. By and bye he came in, the queerest-looking guy you ever saw; for he had an immense white scarf on, a knot on the right shoulder like a prize cabbage, and the ends sweeping the ground. They make it a point here to give as much cloth in this funereal ornament as will make a shirt for the wearer! That is a plain and sober fact, Mr. —— assured me. He took me round the town, which is for all the world just like any other town, and then we came home again, and he played me a lot of Scotch and Irish tunes on the fiddle, with a wonderful degree of *spunk* and *birr;* then we talked a great deal about songs and music; then we had the unfailing Irish dinner of chicken and bacon with greens; then he read me a lot of his poems, and whenever I said "very good," he said,

"Yis, it's kyapital!" (quite seriously;) and then we had tea, and then I came away home again. He gave me quite a lot of his *pomes*, as he calls them, to take with me, which I will hand over to you when I come back. . . .

To the Same.

CULLYBACKEY, *January 4th, 1865.*

. . . . I meant to devote last night, or at least a bit of it, to writing to you; but Mr. Knowles, knowing my fondness for Scotch music, had gone and invited down specially an Irish fiddler who lives not a great way off, to treat me to a quantity. The fiddler made his appearance, fiddle and all, about six o'clock, and, barring the time we took to tea and several intermissions for smoking purposes, which Mr. Knowles himself turned to good use in singing Irish melodies, Mr. Larry M'Kie's "elbow jinked and diddled" till past eleven o'clock. Larry has been in Australia, where he learned a great many Scotch airs from the Scotch gold-diggers, and now he is settled down comfortably to cultivate music and potatoes—for Mr. M'Kie is both a fiddler and a farmer. Also, he sings remarkably well, and the humour with which he renders Sam Lover's Irish songs is quite overpowering, I assure you. Larry has got the Irish susceptibility as well as the Irish humour, and when I touched the strings of his violin in succession downwards, he begged me "fur goodness sake not to do that same; it was so murnfull and melancholy-like it wud make him cry—and," he added, "that's jist as shure as my neem's Larry M'Kie." He is as fond of his fiddle as an ordinary mortal is of his sweetheart. The evening was damp when he came down, and, to prevent her from "ketching harm," he had her secured in the never-failing green bag, then this was swathed in a fine Paisley shawl,

then he put the "darlint" under his greatcoat, surmounting the whole with a cotton umbrella as big as a Lammas-fair tent: and even on his arrival the first thing he did with her was to disentangle and disengage her from all these securities, and warm her tenderly at the fire. Larry is not good at a slow tune, or *chune* as he calls it, but he comes out strong in "jigs, strathspeys, and reels," and he "whacked of" "Tullochgorum," "Killiecrankie," and "The Braes o' Tullymet and Mar," not to mention "Garryowen" and "The Pradhestan Bhoys," and "Saint Pathrick's Day" and "Boyne Water," with inconceivable *vim* and vigour. Altogether, I liked Larry very much indeed; and Larry took so kindly to me that he begged me to settle down here and he would himself take a seat in the church! I thanked him heartily, and assured him that I didn't think the place would just exactly suit me, and that, moreover, I didn't think that I would exactly suit the place. Larry then assured me in turn that it wasn't just such an "abshcure pleece as most people took it to be, for shure," he added, "ye mushn't have heard the song about it that I sung meself twelve times over the night before I left Geelong, and not a sowl there but was weepin' like a Donegal summer, though their bairds were as long as the Apostle Aaron's." I desired him to sing it, which he did with great pathos, and a very nice little song it is, and Larry is going to write down for me both the words and the music. So you see I continue to extract no small amusement and enjoyment out of my quarters in Ireland. Don't believe half the stories they tell you about it—they're all blarney; in fact, there is very little difference between this and Scotland. At the same time, I am beginning to weary slightly to get across the Channel again. However, I haven't very long to wait; I shall be at liberty in about ten days: on Monday week I hope to be in Glasgow. . . . I had just finished dinner, and had

taken my two young friends Lizzie and Willie on my knee to sing them a song, when a deputation of the elders came in to pay me my fee, and also to pay Mrs. Knowles for the lodgings. They paid me much in the usual kind of coin, but Mrs. Knowles, to whom they gave twenty-five shillings, found it to consist of so many coins that she couldn't count it, and was forced to call in my assistance. With some difficulty I succeeded. There were, I think, five fourpenny pieces, nine threepennies, and I don't know how many pennies and halfpennies. This, of course, was done after they went away. You never saw such a droll-looking session in your life. All their hats put together wouldn't have fetched sixpence in an old clothes shop. The principal spokesman was clothed in corduroy breeks, red with a year's draining in heavy clayey soil, a black surtout coat, a red cotton neckerchief, and a pair of clogs. Saving the coat, which I believe he must have donned for the sake of upholding his dignity as chief speaker, the rest were arrayed in very much the same style. They asked me sundry questions, as, How did I like Cullybackey? How long had I been *out?* Did I find the church *very* damp and *awfully* cold?—which questions Mrs. Knowles interpreted to me after the three worthies had taken their departure. It seems that this is a sly style of fishing which they employ in order to *expiscate* (I always like to carry out a metaphor) the man's sentiments as to accepting or declining if they should happen to give him a call. As soon as they had learned that I hadn't been a year *out*, they looked at each other, scratched their heads, rubbed their beards, or at least their jaws, for they are all close shaven, and finally took their pocket-handkerchiefs out of their hats, and, having blown their noses, said that they would have to be going, which they accordingly proceeded to do.

Cullybackey is, however, a rather pleasant little place.

There are plenty of roads and walks about it, some of them going through woods and avenues, some of them merely through long tracts of fields with lots of houses—all farm houses, for everybody is a farmer here, with a little wee farmie that just keeps the family jogging and eating, and not what might be called downright scarecrows. On Sundays they look very respectable, saving their hats. Ireland is a great field for the study of the human hat, as you may see in poor Leech's Irish sketches. I have often stood an hour at the hotel window in Dublin watching the hats, and never failing to be thoroughly interested and amused. But, to return, I feel it very pleasant to walk along one of these roads here, especially after dark, as the candles are all lighted up then, and the whole country-side is a-twinkle with them, here and there and yonder, and through on the other side, and up the hill behind you there, in the jolliest disorder and prettiest confusion. I often think that you would enjoy an hour's walk with all those tiny lights blinking and winking and flitting about, and going out of a sudden, and then of a sudden jumping *in* again. You see I can enjoy almost any place. The church here is a very poor one; the congregation very thin (just now); the pulpit not in good repair; the floor an earthern one, and not a living soul able to keep his feet still for five minutes. Moreover, it stands low, though it does stand very prettily too, fast by the river Maine, which passes on its way to Lough Neagh. There is a church-yard beside the church too—a queer-looking unsymmetrical place, shapen like a bit of paper which one would tear off the corner and along the side of the daily *Scotsman* to light his pipe with. Trees fringe this on all sides round; but through them you can easily count the graves as you go along the public road to Kilrea which passes behind. There are a good many of them—some close to the river's brink, others out on the green, and others, again,

lying up the hill, at an angle of forty-five degrees, basking, as it were, with their faces turned to the south. The people, of course I mean the *living*, are very old-fashioned. They don't sing paraphrases, as Mr. —— —— assured me before the whole congregation, when I had just given them out the 46th, and they read the line always, which has a very strange effect to one who is unaccustomed to it. However, they have not acquired the good old time-honoured Scotch custom of sleeping during the sermon—they listen (I *must* say it, for I have no better simile at hand) "like swine at a yett."

I have had some little difficulty in sliding into the thread of my discourse again at that last "however," for my good friend Larry again made his appearance, and entertained me for several hours with a new batch of songs and airs of all descriptions. He seems perfectly inexhaustible, does Larry. He came down to-night to settle about an excursion we are going to make to-morrow—Mr. Knowles, Larry, and myself —to a place called Bellaghy. This I take to be rather a *plenteous* place, for I learn that the host (intended) is much troubled with gout. I expect, therefore, to find myself in clover for a day, not that I don't find myself in clover where I am, and good broad leaved, red and white flowered clover, too; but, then, you know, "one star differeth from another star," albeit they both be stars. . . .

I have had a letter and a great many papers from Bruce here, for which I am very grateful, for in the present aspect of the American War I devour all discussions of the question and news of the state of affairs with even greater avidity than usual. I am much obliged for your papers too. My sister Frank also sent me a whole bundle of *Scotsmans* (is that the plural?), which took four postage stamps to carry them. The royal mail (or the royal female rather, for our letters are carried by a woman) has never been well since!

Having got to the end of that sentence, let me apologise for the pun—do you see it? I didn't want to cumber the sentence with more parentheses than one, else I should have marrow-boned immediately after it was down. But really it was such an obvious one—"humblest capacity," you know—and then I'm in Ireland, and I defy any man to be in Ireland and not joke. Why, I wrote an indignant letter to Mr. M'Gill the other day, and I joked all the way through it!

It may be necessary to explain to the younger generation that the custom of reading the line, referred to in the foregoing letter as still maintained in the little Irish congregation, was once universal in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, and even now prevails in the Highlands. It originated in the fact that at one time the majority in most congregations could not read. The precentor, therefore, read each line, or each couplet of the Psalm, before he sang it. It was, of course, necessary, in order to keep himself in tune, that he should read on the key of the tune he had chosen, and thus the service of praise was a curious compound of chanting and singing. In country districts it was customary for the precentor to begin the music before the arrival of the minister, executing thus a kind of voluntary while the congregation was assembling. He went right through the Psalms, beginning on one Sunday at the verse where he had been interrupted by the commencement of the regular service on the Sunday previous. It is recorded that a wag, with more wit

than grace, once obtained possession of the precentor's book, and pasted in at the point where the voluntary was to begin, the opening verses of *Chevy Chase.* On the Sunday morning the old precentor took his place at the desk, and, having wiped and adjusted his spectacles, began without suspicion his accustomed chant. The first two lines had quite an orthodox and familiar sound; the worthy man stumbled slightly at the "woeful hunting" in the third, but remembering probably the "partridge on the mountains" to which the Psalmist once likened himself, he passed on, but when he came in the fourth line to the altogether uncanonical name "Chevy Chase," he threw down the book in disgust, exclaiming that he had been precentor in the Burgher Kirk for forty years, and never knew that "Chevy Chase" was in the Psalms of David before. The abandonment of the custom of reading the line when the spread of education rendered it unnecessary, was resisted most strongly as a dangerous "innovation," and was nearly as fruitful of contention and of "cases" before the Ecclesiastical Courts as the change of posture at praise and the introduction of the organ have been in more recent years. Scripture was ransacked with a zeal quite equal to that of modern protesters against "anarchy in worship," to find texts in support of the ancient custom. To a deputation from the Glasgow Presbytery, which had been sent to visit a congregation where dissention prevailed on the grave question, the words of the Psalm, "Their line is gone out through all the earth," were quoted as un-

doubted Scriptural authority for the reading of the line. The men of one generation are curiously like the men of another generation.

To —— ——.

SIXTOWNS, *13th January, 1865.*

This is a most entertaining place, rendered so by the amusing petty wants and laughable hardships to which the dwellers in it are subjected. . . . As you know, I am living at the house of Mr. Kennedy, who, with his own unaided and unassisted energies, discharges the threefold duties of schoolmaster, precentor, and hairdresser. The other night we had a number of the "boys"—so called here because they are not boys but men—for the last-mentioned trade to be exercised upon. They submitted their polls successively to the scissors. Mr. Kennedy followed up the pruning operations with a few "chunes" on the fiddle. He plays pretty tolerably on an instrument *of his own making*, which underlined bit of information reminds me of the fact that to all his other trades he adds the elements of cabinet-making and playing. . . . The house is a new one (and it answers for church too). It is the dreadfullest house for smoke I ever lived in. Mr. Kennedy smokes, I smoke, and so does every chimney in the place. Indeed, we have had to sit with the front door half-open, with a "great muckle stane" at the back of it to keep it from opening too far, ever since I came—the wind happening to be in the worst direction. If we close it for a moment, there is an immediate strike among the chimneys. Now, it happens just to open at the back of my own door, consequently a wind sweeps across the floor of my room and up the chimney like the great Euroclydon. It is as much as I can do to keep my slippers

from going up with it! To supplement this little laughing Zephir, there are two panes out of the window, their place being but somewhat insufficiently supplied by a curious and ingenious combination of newspapers and pot-lids, between whose multitudinous interstices the wind plays pibrochs from morning to night, and then again from night to morning. Occasionally it takes a momentary capricious fit and goes backwards, in which case a perfectly volcanic eruption takes place, clouds and volumes of half-burned peats, and whitey brown scoriæ, come belching into the room, and, remembering the terrible fate of Pliny, I rush precipitately to the furthest corner, from which, when all is over again, I cautiously emerge, and brush my garments. By good luck, when I was in Dublin, my sister Frank sent me a smoking-cap, which I am obliged here to wear constantly to prevent my hair from getting dishevelled and powdered with peat ashes. Thus fortified with my cap and my philosophy, I thoroughly enjoy the humour of the situation; and I am sure if Mr. Kennedy were to hear my cachinations (especially during the eruptions) he would have serious doubts of my sanity.

The wandering nature of the Probationer's life is well illlustrated by the fact that we find Davidson next in Lanark, and then in Aldershott.

To MR. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

LANARK, SATURDAY EVENING, *January 28th, 1865.*

I have *not* brought home a call from Ireland—am quite as much in want of a lever as ever. I suppose if I am to rise (to a pulpit) at all, I shall have to do it through sheer force of specific levity. That appears to be the only reasonable

method at present, *e.g.*, —— ——, etc., etc. However, I enjoyed my tour in the "sister country" very much for all that. I walked twenty-eight miles one day, and on two occasions I did thirty with my bag on my back, and felt quite as fresh after it as if I hadn't done five. You see I am rather more locomotive than I used to be; but, on reflection, I don't think that my sloth revealed itself very much in that form after all. I never was a bad walker—not that I profess to be a fast one either—only I can hold out for a long spell, and generally make as good a show about the winning-post as any of my neighbours. . . .

I was very sorry to hear of your father's death. I was told of it in Dublin by Robertson of Balfron (who came to succeed me there) just the day before Christmas, and it took me quite by surprise. It would make your Christmas a dull one this year—dull to all of you, specially to your mother. It is, no doubt, common-place consolation to say that "your loss is your father's gain"—and yet a man should thank God that such comfort is so common, and, by His infinite mercy, so accessible to us all that it has become common-place. I reproach myself much for not having written to Robert since this mournful event, but I will do so soon.

If you get this on Monday, come in to Edinburgh, to Elliot's, where I am to stay all night, and we shall set out for Jethart on Tuesday about noon, or a little earlier.

A Diary, beginning at the opening of 1865 and extending to the close of 1866, has been preserved. It contains little more than a jotting of his movements, with occasional references to books read and persons met. The sermons preached on the Sundays are noted, each discourse having a name which is

generally the principal word of the text in abbreviated form—

Sunday, 22nd January, at Lanark.—*Serv. Tap.** Reading the *Gentle Life* at night, which —— recommended to me as resembling Bacon! Ye gods! It is pleasant reading—very light, very skimmy, very quotatious, very pretentious. —— does not know a good book from a bad one.

Friday, 27th.—Just getting into Glasgow, on my way to see Jack (M'Intyre) at Paisley. A girl who serves in "Glasca," but has been laid up "wi' the rheumatics," has just discovered that a soldier of the 78th knows her brother, "Jamie M'Nab, a wee, black, pock-markit bit body," a private in the same regiment. She is going to "gie him a refreshment" over the discovery.

Sunday, 29th, Lanark.—Very cold and windy, the snow still lying all round. Very cold during the forenoon service. Preached *Med.* and *Pow.* Attendance, forenoon, as good as last day. Evening thin. Must go in for more life—*must.* Read MacLaren's *Sermons.* Turned in at 12.30.

In the course of the following week he went to Aldershott, going by way of Edinburgh and Jedburgh. He occupied the Aldershott pulpit for seven Sundays, beginning on February 5th.

To —— ——.

ALDERSHOTT, *February 14th.*

I think I had a larger audience last Sabbath evening than I had the former one, spite of bad weather. After the

* The names he had given to two of his sermons.

service there is a prayer-meeting, which is only conducted by myself—the members I may happen to mention engaging in prayer, and myself reading the hymns. I have never been in any congregation where so large a proportion of the members can take part in the prayer-meeting as I find here —in fact, I may call upon any man present to engage in prayer, just on the spur of the moment, and run no chance of getting a denial from any of them. A good man might make a good church in England, after a little while of reasonably diligent and intelligent work, *provided always there is a population.* The want of a population is the loss and death of our stations in Ireland. Sixtowns is an example of that.

His long location at Aldershott rendered further sermon-writing necessary. The subjects he chose were: Ecclesiastes vii. 3, "Sorrow is better than laughter;" Psalm cxix. 123, "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation and for the word of thy righteousness;" Proverbs xviii. 24, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" Philippians ii. 12, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" and 2 Cor. x. 5, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The introduction to the last of these discourses is interesting, as showing how his enthusiasm for all that was connected with the heroic past of his native country supplied him with material for illustrating divine truth to his soldier-audience at Aldershott:—

Over the entrance of a very old house, in a very

ancient Scottish town, I read not long ago the following inscription:—

> "Since word is thrall, but thought is free,
> Keep well thy tongue, I counsel thee"—

that is to say: "Speech is liable to criticism, and may bring you into trouble; be wise and careful, therefore, in the exercise of it." The inscription, however, gathers additional significance from the fact that the house in question stands within a hundred yards of a royal residence, and must have been built at a time when a more stringent law of treason rendered it very dangerous to make very free, even in the most private of conversations, with anything appertaining to constituted authority; and it is therefore exceedingly likely that those who daily passed the door or entered the house, and in passing or entering read the cautioning motto, read it with a mental reference to the sovereign authority to which they were always in such uncomfortable neighbourhood. To them, therefore, its meaning and force must have amounted to just about this: "Think what pleases yourself—but, remember, that in speech you must please the King." Looked at in a third light—a general one this time—we may take this somewhat suggestive inscription as marking the ultimate limit of human observation and control—the line where our neighbour's knowledge of us and authority over us have their end, and where the really sacred and inviolable retreat of absolute personal freedom begins. Within this line no one can pass except by our own permission, or see anything except what is pointed out by ourselves; and, if any intelligence goes out of this seclusion, we must ourselves, by act or word, or sign or look, be the bearers of it. This is the last retreat of liberty—a retreat whose sacred solitude can be entered and desecrated by neither king nor kaiser.

And yet, when a man turns to survey this retired domain of thought wherein he stands, and of which he is the only human ruler, responsible to no fellow-man for the verdicts there passed upon what is seen in the outward world, for the conclusions formed in its secret councils, for the marshallings and processions and revolutions of ideas and fancies which go on continually in its fields, invisible to all eyes except his own—when a man turns to survey all this in the light of his faith in Christ, and the union to Christ which that faith produces, in short, when he surveys it all under the light of the Christian religion, he finds that even here he has a Master—a King whom in his very thoughts he must obey—to whom he owes as deeply the allegiance of thought as he owes to lawful authority the allegiance of act. "Word is thrall," says the old motto; but Paul, going still further and still deeper, entering into the region which is uninvaded by man, assures the Christian that thought also must be thrall to the sovereignty of Christ our King. Christ's reign and sway in a man's heart and nature must be an ever-growing one—its boundaries must inexorably and relentlessly extend and advance, leaving no strongholds unreduced, no fastnesses or retirements unpenetrated and unsubdued. His reign, in its wider aspect over the universe of being, is only complete when He hath put all His enemies under His feet: and in the individual man the same process of progressive conquest must continually develop itself, even in the most secret and private recesses, and it is the loyal Christian's part to be continually exercising every capability, and employing every possible power, in conquering to Christ the whole realm of thought itself. He must bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Regular employment, and intercourse with kind and hospitable friends, made his sojourn at Alder-

shott very pleasant. His jottings in his diary are summed up at the end of the weeks by such entries as these: "A tolerably happy week on the whole, being a busier one than most of its predecessors;" "More busy week than usual on the whole;" "Busiest week I've had for many a month—it is happy when looked back upon." The week he left Aldershott is thus characterised: "Not a very happy week—first part uncertain, and the latter part unhappy; for I find that any continued residence in a place leads me to contract very strong likings, which are somewhat violated by sudden departures."

A Sunday in London—where he met George and William Douglas—two at Wolverhampton, and three at Leeds, completed his English engagements for the time. When he was at Wolverhampton he made the following entry in his diary:—"Saturday, 8th April. Most exquisite day, so exquisitely vernal that I broke forth into song in a few verses called, 'In the fair spring weather.' Walked a little, and read some, and committed half my sermon." Even the atmosphere of the black country could not darken the joy with which this singer welcomed the return of spring:—

IN THE FAIR SPRING WEATHER.

Proteus—"My tales of love were wont to weary you;
I know you joy not in a love discourse."
—*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Act II., Scene iv.

I sat with Jack an hour to-day
Down there in the valley,

Where the wanton River stays
With flowery shores to dally;
And, as we sat upon the grass,
Side by side together,
I talk'd of love till Jack was tired
In the fair Spring weather.

In vain he started other themes—
Priests, politics, or learning—
My golden thread would still gleam out
At every stop and turning:
For flowers that sprang and birds that sang,
Flying hither, thither,
The very River babbled Love,
In the fair Spring weather!

Jack smiled and talk'd philosophy
Over my amorous fancy:
"They say, 'What's in the eye itself
Is all it sees or can see;'
And if from every living thing
You do such meanings gather,
Why, then—you are yourself in love,
In the fair Spring weather!

"Streams, and flowers, and birds that sing
As they do fly or flutter,—
They speak not to all human hearts
What to yours they utter:
Flowers bear to me but scent and hue,
And birds of every feather
Sing what they've sung these thirty years
In the fair Spring weather.

"And all your fond interpretings
Of sound or sight that passes
Are only echoes of the thoughts
That haunt your heart's recesses:
I find such sweet stupidities
In upper world nor nether"—
"Bah! Jack, you're mad as ever a hare
In the mad March weather!"

Still—Jack's blunt charges made me wince,
Though I replied with scorning;
A certain something whispers me
That—he was right this morning!
And low down in the valley there,
Could we but meet together,
There are *three words* I'd say to her
In the fair Spring weather.

In going from Wolverhampton to Leeds, he went by way of Loughborough where he spent a pleasant week with his old Ancrum teacher and Edinburgh room-mate, Mr. Scott, who then held a situation in that Midland town. The sight of his old friend was most grateful to him, after his many wanderings among strangers. He was in his cheeriest mood, and told stories of his Irish and other experiences so admirably that Mr. Scott, proud of the boy he had taught at the village school, urged him to give himself to literature, telling him if he wrote as he talked, he could not fail to succeed. Davidson's reply was characteristic —"I will tell you the stories, if you will write them."

To the REV. JOHN M'INTYRE.

LEEDS, *April 19th, 1865.*

No doubt you expect me to begin this epistle with the customary series of apologies. Never were more mistaken in your life, Sir! Apologies! quotha. Why, the fact is, I have a good mind to feel insulted. Here have you "been and gone and got called" (you see my stay of one week in London has cockneyised my style horribly—I shall never be able to write classic English any more)—nay, more than that, you have been and gone and accepted, and never so much, or rather so little, as sent a fellow a miserable Glasgow newspaper, or even a Paisley one, to acquaint him either with the one fact or the other. Out upon you! . . .

When I left Aldershott—where you will be surprised to learn, almost as much as I am surprised to tell you, that I "got thro'" without accident—I went to Wolverhampton. Your memory there is still savoury. Mr. ——, who is a regular fine old fellow (may his pipe never go out, nor his barrel of home-brewed run dry!), sends you the love and esteem of his whole exuberant heart; he hopes that all good angels may flap their wings incessantly about your ears; in fact, Mr. —— invokes upon your head, honestly, as many blessings as an Irish beggar invoked upon mine, insincerely, when I took advantage of a dark night to palm off a doubtful penny on him. (He was a great scamp—all Irish beggars are—so that I feel no remorse.) When I was at Wolverhampton they had called Dunlop, and were anxiously awaiting his answer. From that very interesting vacancy I was next sent to this one. Of course there is a man called here already—our friend James. On the whole, I have had a very fine run of *chances* these last twelve months—very. I am almost tempted to begin to have half a mind to think that it wouldn't be very unreasonable on my part to feel

almost inclined to give some little harbour, in my wounded bosom, to just the little premonitory foreshadowings of a state of moral feeling almost approaching the nature of mild irritation—not to put too fine a point upon it! However—

> "Fill high the bowl with Samian wine, (coffee, alas!)
> We will not think on themes like these,—
> It made Anacreon's song divine—
> He served, but served—well, not —— ——."

It's one great solace to my mind that Richmond has fallen. How do you feel, John? How does Gibson feel? (if you ever do see Gibson). . . . It is rather singular, isn't it? that Geordie, James, Dunlop, and yourself, should all be under call at the same time—

> "Tib she sat down wi' her wheel by the fire,
> An' counted the hours that were fast fleein' by her,
> An' aye she wad say, wi' a heavy 'Haw-hee!'
> 'A'body's like to get married but me!'"

Tib, you're a great fool! Remember me to your father and mother, your sister, and all my friends in Paisley. How is Bruce? I am going to write him the day after to-morrow.

After spending the Synod week in Edinburgh, and preaching in Glasgow, he returned to England in the beginning of June, to be present at Mr. Douglas' ordination at Walker—preaching at Otterburn on his way home to Jedburgh.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, JEDBURGH, *14th June, 1865.*

. . . . Otterburn has, of course, been long an interesting place to me, and I was very glad of the opportunity of seeing it. Miss —— guided me to the place where the battle was

fought, and upon which there is a rude kind of monument to commemorate the event. It stands in a small wood on a long, wide, sloping hill-side; in fact, the northern slope of Redesdale. The monument is in a little cleared space in the midst of the wood, and it was somewhere in this open space, they tell us, that the Douglas was slain. I sung a verse of the ballad to Miss ——, to let her hear the tune, which, though she lives so near the place, she assures me she never heard before—and then went home and supped on a mutton chop. (N.B.—Prose is the setting of all poetry; romance is only romance because everything else is reality; therefore, I will not retract the chop.) Otterburn is a very wee kirky, but it is exceedingly well-filled with a congregation of farmers, well-to-do shepherds, their wives, children, and dogs. The collies mustered pretty strong on Sunday, and, as the day was hot, and the doors had to be thrown open, they enjoyed themselves greatly, walking up and down the passage to take the air, and occasionally going out for a minute to lift up their voices against any passing Sabbath-breaker, who they wisely thought ought to have been worshipping in the kirk with decent folk.

In the evening I had a walk with Mrs. and Miss —— up through a thick wood of firs and larches and spruces, to the top of a hill, where we sat down for an hour and talked, while I smoked one of the fragrant Havanas which —— had mindfully laid out for my special behoof. The evening was very pleasant. There was a cuckoo uttering its "curious voice" from the opposite slope, while a number of *cushies* in the wood struck in more hoarsely with a bass to pretty much the same words.

Next morning I set out for the Carter Fell, a distance of sixteen miles, where I had appointed to meet Jack's conveyance at two o'clock. I never enjoyed a finer walk in my life. I had to follow the Rede all the way to the top of the

Fell, so the way was unmistakeable. The morning had been a little frosty, and so everything was inexpressibly fresh and dewy, and the birds were singing lustily—larks, linties, and mavises—with fitful inbreakings of peaseweeps, whaups, and cuckoos. One of the cuckoos sat down upon an alder not thirty yards off, but took fright as I came nearer, and flew to the other side of the water, where it cuckooed till I was out of hearing. By and bye, of course, it grew hotter, and I marched on with much perspiration and broiling, till at last I reached the tryste at the Fell, at exactly one minute to two, having marched at the rate of four miles an hour all the way. I was regretting as I came up the glen that I hadn't named one instead of two to Jack, keeping myself, of course, to the latter hour; for it is a singular idiosyncracy of my respected brother's nature to be always one hour behind when he makes an appointment. I was morally certain he wouldn't be at the spot; nor was he, nor did he appear till the proper time had expired; indeed, he didn't appear at all, for he staid at home for the sake of Frank, whom he sent out for a drive with Bill as Jehu. . . .

I found an appointment to Berwick, for the fourth Sabbath of June, awaiting me on my arrival. I have to go to Selkirk on Sabbath, and, I expect, to Paisley on the second Sabbath of July. If I only knew where I am to go on the first of July, I should be all right for a month. . . .

After fulfilling the appointments referred to in this letter, he was sent for three Sundays to Bristol, whence he made a hurried run to London and Paris with his friend, Mr. Henderson. Till about the end of the year, his engagements were nearer home. In September, we find him at Kinross, making a pilgrimage to the meeting place of the first Secession Presbytery.

To —— ——

KINROSS, *September, 15th, 1865.*

I have had no time to weary since I came to Kinross, for I found Mr. Torrie here preaching in Kennedy's church, and we have walked about a good deal together seeing the neighbourhood and its "ferlies." On Monday he went to visit Ben Martin at Leslie, and I accompanied him four miles or so, as far as Balgedie. On the Wednesday I returned thither to meet him, for he was coming back that day. I set out about ten—a fine breezy sunshiny day it was—and, as I had just waited to get your letter, I took it with me and broke it open and read it as I sauntered along beside the Loch. When I got to Balgedie I found no appearance of him at the appointed hour, and walked on a little further past Kinesswood, where poor Michael Bruce was born, and then I sat down by the wayside till Torrie should turn up. . . .

At last he "arrove," as the Methodist parson said, and we returned to Kinross. Yesterday morning we walked together as far as the famous Gairney Bridge, to see the house where the first meeting of Presbytery took place. We asked a wayfarer what particular house "had had the honour," and he told us he was going past it, and would be glad to point it out, mentioning, at the same time, that opinions differed as to the particular house, but that according to his own private opinion—which, of course, was the only correct one—it was "that ane wi' its end to the road on the left-hand side," and he pointed to a biggin', straw-roofed and battered with many winters, and, in short, quite wretched enough to be the "real Simon Pure." However, we had to pass "another of the same" on the right-hand side before we reached the competitor of which he wrote himself supporter, and, at the end of this one, which also turned to the road, we found

a certain kerseckied corduroy-trousered and knee-bratted "Wulliam"—for so our friend addressed him—whose opinion he thought would be worth taking, just for the sake of "confirmation, ye ken." He accordingly addressed "Wulliam," first on the state of advancement of the harvest work, to which Wulliam answered civilly and discreetly; secondly on the subject on hand—but there he found he had caught a Tartar. Wulliam supported the "right-hand side o' the road" opinion: we were in the midst of a controversy. Our friend quoted "prent" on his own side, and denied that Wulliam's party could show a single blessed line of letter-press that gave them the least countenance. Wulliam turned up a very snuffy nose at the idea of "prent," and tumbled our friend over like a ninepin, by citing the irrefragable testimony of "auld Tammas Meldrum, that was deid and gane this forty year, and that was weel yont o' echty" (the tough and persistent old Thomas that he was) "afore he de'ed." Our friend, however, remembered him of an "engagement wi' a gig," and executed as graceful a strategic movement as ever escaped being called a downright retreat. A happy idea fortunately entered my head, and Torrie approved of it, viz., that we should "do" both hovels, which we accordingly did "do," and, as Wulliam's hovel, to do him and it justice, was really, if possible, the *worse* of the two, we both came away with the impression that its claims were the *best*.

Another piece of U.P. antiquity claimed our attention on our return, to wit, the funeral of the Rev. John Leishman, senior minister of the second church here, and who was a minister of 62 years' standing, 90 years old, and the father of the Church. Torrie and I had the honour of attending his remains to a pleasant old spot by the side of the Loch, where, if there be ghosts, they must have a delightful time of it, the Kinross shades, wandering by the winding and pebbly shore of the still and clear and silent lake on starry

nights beneath "the glimpses of the moon." And there we buried him. He was a good, gentle, pious old man, so *requiescat in pace.* To-day Torrie and I made our final excursion, in company, to the top of Benarty, on the south side of the Loch. In coming home we skirted the shores of the lake, and found it a grateful amusement on a hot day to cast our stockings and shoes and wade the wee sleekit pawky stream of the Gairney, which steals like a dream through the land, and slily hides itself in Loch Leven. And now Torrie is gone to Auchtermuchty, and I am left to my own resources, but I shall manage to tide over what remains of my appointed time in this pleasant little town pretty well. There are plenty of books, and, with all that walking, I have still managed to read Grosart's *Temptation of Christ*, his little work, *Christ for all the World*, Lamartine's *Pictures of the French Revolution*, and half Ferrier's *Institutes of Metaphysic.* Besides, there are two old women—one very ill, the other eighty years old last May, of which she has been blind for sixteen—whom I visit mostly every day for a while, so you will see there isn't much time left for wearying.

After leaving Kinross he went home to fulfil a promise to preach for the first time for his friend and minister, Mr. Polson, in his native church, Blackfriars, Jedburgh. The trying ordeal was made still more trying by the fact that he was far from well.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *September 26th.*

You will be glad to learn that I managed to preach on Sunday both in the afternoon and in the evening. It isn't a very agreeable business preaching to one's "Romans,

countrymen, and lovers." However, I felt nowise nervous, but from pure weakness couldn't speak very well out. The said weakness you needn't set down as a very alarming business, as it was simply owing to my having eaten little or nothing for about three days. One *does* get on very badly without food. However, after preaching I felt such an amount of the ravenous about me that I could have eaten a horse, which thing you will be glad to learn I didn't do; for owing to the precautions of my friends I was persuaded to let a fine dapple grey canter gaily home with its master, and to content myself with beef and apple-pie. Whether it was the beef and the apple pie, or the consciousness of having exercised such an amount of heroic self-denial (in sparing said grey horse I mean), or whether (which third theory I feel inclined to adopt) it was a combination of both, I don't exactly know, only I felt quite strong at night, and spoke out so well, that auld Wattie Lowrie, who is as deaf as his own tree leg, actually turned up the Psalms and the text for himself. I am told that the folk are greatly pleased, which I neither believe nor don't believe, knowing the awful tendency of human nature to give flattery and to court it. Therefore, all that I say to you is this, that I preached and did not *stick*. I can answer of course for my own people; they were pleased, which they would doubtless have been if I had made as bad an appearance as Dominie Sampson himself. My mother was in such a state of perturbation that owing to the steam rising from her face and dimming her spectacles, she never saw me, I believe.

His diary has the following entry:—"Kinross. Saturday, 16th September. Got the list at night, and find myself bound for Orkney in winter. I have been wanting to see Orkney." The experience of a United

Presbyterian probationer is not complete without a trip to the Orkney Islands. The Church has obtained a firm footing in that northern archipelago. The congregation of Kirkwall is one of the largest and most powerful in the denomination, and, mainly through the almost apostolic zeal of its late minister, the venerable Dr. Paterson, congregations have been planted in almost every hamlet in Pomona, and in nearly all the surrounding islands. In these congregations vacancies are very frequent: the isolated position of the churches, and the inhospitable climate leading ministers to seek translation to some sphere of work in the sunnier south. There is thus a large demand for preachers, and only a very early settlement avails to obviate the necessity of all whose names are on "the list" braving the perils of the northern voyage. Not even the most timid sailor or least adventurous of the young men at the command of the all-powerful "Committee," ventures to hope for exemption. The most he can do is to pray that his flight polewards may not be in the winter. But, whether in winter or in summer, the Orkney expedition supplies the probationer with a new experience. In Davidson's time the form of Church government in the islands was really a modified Episcopacy. Everybody spoke of Dr. Paterson as the Bishop of Orkney, and his powers were almost Episcopal. The commanding position of his congregation; the fact that he had been the founder of most of the stations in the Presbytery, as well as his distin-

guished ability and weight of character, quite naturally made his influence paramount. When the young men appointed to service in the islands landed at Kirkwall, they found their headquarters provided for them at Miss Bews' lodgings. They then waited on "the Dr." to receive his commands, and were by him distributed among the vacant charges under his care: going at his bidding to Holm, or Sandwick, or Shapinshay, or Westray, returning when they had fulfilled each engagement to receive further commands, and to refresh their spirits by intercourse with each other in Miss Bews' comfortable lodgings. Men fortunate enough to be sent north in summer find the experience pleasant enough. There is a charm in the long days and in the midnight twilight; the roads are good, and the seas are calm; and in passing from one station to another there is opportunity of seeing with comfort the wonders of the Maeshowe and the standing-stones of Stennis, or of going up the Hill of Hoy and searching for the Carbuncle, or lying in the hollow of the Dwarfie Stane. In winter the expedition is dreary enough. Davidson reckoned it only in harmony with his general ill-luck as a probationer that he should be sent to Orkney in winter, but he never grumbled.

To the REV. GEORGE DOUGLAS.

GLASGOW, *November 2nd, 1865.*

. . . . "I've pacëd much this weary mortal round" since I saw your blessed face last, my darlint. I have been

in England, Scotland, Ireland, and France this summer, and now in a fortnight I start polewards. This is great fun. I have, singular to say, been in a vacancy since I saw you, to wit Kinross, but I have declined the call they addressed to me: Hollo! stop—there's some mistake there, surely! Ah, yes—I mean they have declined addressing a call to me. Well, it comes to the same thing after all—to wit, I am going to Orkney. I rather like the idea of Orkney in winter: I have a fancy that "Orkney is nothing, if not stormy." Still, this particular season cannot with confidence be called the very best for sailing purposes, and I confess I *do* feel inclined to exclaim with old Sir Patrick Spens:

> "O wha is this has dune the deed,
> An' tauld the clerk o' me,
> To send me oot at this time o' the year
> To sail upon the sea!"

However, what's the use of whining? I hate whining. Out upon whiners, moaners, groaners, lamentation-makers! Bah!—let us change the subject. . . .

To —— ——.

HOLM, *Wednesday, November 29th, 1865.*

. . . . The chimney to-day is smoking so dreadfully that I have just made up my mind to take a walk as far as Kirkwall and give the wind a chance to change before I come back again. In other respects I am quite comfortable, and can see no reason for Orkney holding the evil reputation among us that it does hold; or for anybody being much pitied by his friends, though sent in the depth of winter. Only that smoke. Well, I may say I never saw a smoky chimney till I came here: I have seen one now, however. But one great consolation lies in the fact that it never smokes except

when the wind is in the north, and Mrs. Stewart tells me that it scarcely ever blows from that quarter. However, it happens to be blowing to-day so strong that I can't stand it any longer. I have nearly rubbed my eyes out. I have been weeping these two or three hours. I have nearly coughed myself into consumption or the rupture of a blood-vessel. And, therefore, ho! for Kirkwall. . . .

To the Same.

SANDWICK, *December 18th, 1865.*

. . . . I had quite an interesting walk to Sandwick. . . . . After leaving Mr. Reid's I had a good road for seven or eight miles across the plain of Stennis; then I had to leave what they called the "made road," and turn into one which was never made, but, like Topsy, had simply "growed." It was a cruel, bad road—now spreading away out in tracts innumerable over the heath, as if a hundred carts had crossed the moor abreast, then running suddenly into one gorge, half-a-foot deep of mud and water—as if the carts had all at once fallen in behind each other and tried it in single file. To consummate the joke, it fell dark as I entered on this interesting line of march. You may imagine, then, what fun it must have been. I stood still a dozen times to look up at the stars and laugh aloud; indeed, I was compelled to halt from the fact of my having stuck, and, the work of extrication requiring to be gone about with much caution, as a single impatient jerk might have left the jerked foot shoeless! At length a shape—it might be a man or it might be a coffin, so far as daylight helped one to discern—showed itself of a sudden at a distance of a dozen yards or so, which, on my addressing it, turned out to be a man, and by and bye developed into the schoolmaster of Sandwick. "Is this the road to Sandwick?" said I, to which

the schoolmaster replied that it was, "but," he added, "if you follow it you're done!" I said that I had for the most part found my way to a place by following the road, and that, if they didn't go by the same rule in Orkney, I was likely to turn out but a poor traveller! So he explained that, though the part I had already crossed was certainly bad, what yet remained was unspeakably worse; in fact, he gave me to understand that the one part was to the other much as the Poet-Laureate puts the question of the sexes—

"As moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine."

However, he would turn back a few hundred yards and put me in the direction of the manse: so he led me away from the road a little distance till we came to a little runlet, which we crossed by stepping-stones. He then halted, pointed to the little patch of paley-blue colour in the west, which still lingered whereabouts the sun had gone down, told me that the manse was *there*, and so returned, and I saw him no more. I then marched straight upon the light —at least as straight as I could, for the moor was dreadfully cut up by holes and ditches, besides the *alto relievo* of hillocks and tufts of heather. At length I lighted upon a house, and knocked at the door. It was opened by a woman, of whom I enquired the way. The woman stalked silently out on the heath about a hundred yards, pointed again to the paley-blue smear in the west, and said the manse was *there*—and so returned, and I saw her no more. Another half-hour, which I spent in crossing ploughed fields, or rather patches (for they are in no way fenced off from the surrounding waste), and in leaping ditches and "such amusements and manly exercises," brought me to a second house, from which there issued, on my knuckle-alarm at his door, another "intelligent native," a man this time, who, bare-headed, accompanied me about a quarter of a mile to a

point from which it was all plain sailing, and another quarter of a mile brought me to the manse.

This December night march across the moor has quite made my reputation here for a man of energy and valour: and I may tell you that I astonished the Holm folks by walking out there from Kirkwall after dark, in the face of the wind and rain, when the gale was at its height. But I think the Holm exploit was decidedly a good one (don't say I never praise myself again). Geordie Steven besought me to turn again (he had set me out of town about a mile, and that before the rain came on), but I was ashamed to show the white feather, so I kept on, just to show what kind of pluck there is to be found on the Border—though I confess I did entertain a secret wish that I had never set out. You have no idea how the wind blows here, where there is neither wall, nor wood, nor hill, nor anything else to break its force or afford the battered wretch the slightest shelter. I was sometimes blown back a few paces—often I could only stand still and hold my ground with difficulty. Stewart said it was the best feat he had known for some time, and I am fool enough to be fond of praise of that kind.

This Sandwick is a very solitary place in the mainland * close to the sea. I have been along seeing the great cliffs to-day which front the Atlantic, and watching for hours the long heavy waves that come rolling in and break with a din like thunder, which never ceases. The headland is all broken and bored through by their unceasing assaults. . . .

To the REV. JAMES BROWN.

SANDWICK, *December 12th, 1865.*

. . . . I am now settled for two Sundays in this solitude of Sandwick. I like a little solitude occasionally; it enables

* The island of Pomona is by Orcadians called the mainland.—ED.

you to collar yourself, as it were, and do the little overhauling which one is apt to omit or avoid among the haunts of men. All that is well enough for a fortnight or so; but Sandwick for a year, or, still worse, Sandwick for life, is a thought which might very well give any human soul pause. I amused myself the other night by a painful kind of speculation as to what I should do in the scarcely conceivable event of being settled in this waste place. "I would, first of all, grow idle," said I to myself, "then moody, then mad, and perhaps wind up with murdering my wife." At that point I broke off the train of "not impossibles." Then, there's the melancholy Kirk and God's bleak Acre; I was down looking at them to-day, and the sight of them made me think that it would be even worse to die and be buried here than to pass one's life. The sea, at a little distance, roars and thunders everlastingly; the spray even comes up the lonely hill-side to drench the dead men's graves, upon which the thin, harsh grass only grows in little knots and tufts and patches, through which the sand shows like the skin of a mangy dog. If I were minister of Sandwick, the sight of that kirk-yard would make me die of self-pity by anticipation. Keats spoke of "feeling the daisies growing over him." Somehow, I can't look into that desolate place without having a fancy-feeling of the sharp sand and the salt-sea spray chafing and pricking every limb of me. On the whole, I consider a fortnight of Sandwick will be comfortable enough—but not much longer. I should be getting south again in a fortnight or three weeks, if the fates be favourable. Solitude makes a man long-winded, and I hope you will let that excuse cover the lengthiness of this.

To —— ——.

SANDWICK, *December 19th.*

I am going to flit from my present quarters to-morrow

morning for Kirkwall, there to learn "where next?" and I mean to take the standing-stones of Stennis and the renowned Maeshowe, with its burrows and chambers and runes, on my way. The people are very kind, and insist upon sending a conveyance * with me as far as the locality rendered interesting by these antiquities, and from which a walk of nine or ten miles will take me into Kirkwall. When I get there and learn my destination, I will add that bit of information to the end of this letter.

To-day I have been busy with the endeavour to gratify my geological friend, Adam Mathieson, by procuring him a few specimens from the fossiliferous deposits for which this neighbourhood is famous. I went down to —— and inquired for —— ——, and then inquired of him where the fossils are to be found. Mr. —— is a queer-looking old grizzly-headed amiable scarecrow in a blue coat and trousers. These are the only parts of his garments that one could quite swear to, besides his hat. *That* was his "other one," which he put on in honour of the stranger, for when I went in he cunningly dropped the every-day article into a dark corner, thinking that I didn't see it. But I *did* see it. Well, I wont say anything about the every-day one—it would be mean. He was very obliging. He told me he didn't happen to have any himself at present, and was unable to quarry just now: in fact, he had got three or four of his ribs broken a week or two ago, but in spite of that little trifle he would go with me to the quarry, which was about a mile distant on the top of the cliffs that front the Atlantic. So we went to the quarry, which I found to be as he had said, on the top of a beetling crag, descending sheer to the bottom of a tremendous *voe*, where the hoarse waves came tumbling and rushing in for a hundred yards as far as we could

* Let me shove into a footnote the embarrassing little fact that the *conveyance* is a *cart*. Never mind.

see, and beyond that I don't know how many yards further, where we couldn't see. So there we worked for an hour or so, hewing and chipping, smoking and chatting, and the sea roaring several hundred feet below—one of the finest and wildest places that I ever saw. Then we came away with an armful of little fragments, and he made me go in and sit down, which I accordingly did, and was hospitably entertained with conversation and wine by himself and one of the ladies. Upon the whole, I began to regret that I didn't discover that "seam" a little sooner, as it might have stuck a few feathers into time's wings, which they have sadly lacked the last five or six days. . . .

STROMNESS, *December 23rd.*

. . . . What *have* I been doing, then? Well, very little, except walking about the face of the earth, at least that little mole on the earth's face which polite men have long ago called Pomona. I suppose they were more easily pleased long ago with scenery than we fastidious *dilettanti* are now-a-days, or they would never have pasted so pretty and fertile a name upon so bleak and barren a place. However, it is possible that these old people were more ironical than polite, and called the place by that name because it had so little claim to such a nice one. But, whatever may be the state of the case with respect to the name, and the reasons for it, that doesn't at all affect the fact that I have been "walking up and down in it" a good deal the last two days or three. I told you the other night that I was going to start the next day for Kirkwall, and that I expected a "conveyance" part of the way. Well, I have determined to elevate that "conveyance" out of the footnote into the text, and therefore let me say quite boldly that I was *carted* from Sandwick as far as the Standing Stones—nay further than that, for the kind-hearted man insisted on going on another

mile or so, and only left me at the Maeshowe, near the house of Turmiston, which, I think, is mentioned in the *Pirate*. From there I marched a-foot to Kirkwall, and reached the Barrack about six or seven o'clock in the evening; I might have got there sooner, but I went in at Firth . . . ; it was with great reluctance that I at last rose to shoulder my shirts and fossils, and resume my journey.

I found, when I reached Kirkwall, that the Doctor had written to me at Sandwick, and directed me to preach at Stromness on Sabbath; but the letter and I had crossed each other on the way, so I had my journey for nothing. However, when I say "for nothing," I forgot I saw ——, and found Henderson and other two in lodgings, which made up for the trouble I had taken, even though I were to omit the fact that I enjoy the journeys greatly. I told you over the page that I had determined to promote the cart, but I didn't tell you the reason. Well, the reason is twofold. For to begin, really the cart bulked so largely in the history of my Wednesday, and did me such excellent good service, that, were there no other consideration, it would have been the basest ingratitude to leave the poor, prosy, kindly, heavy, serious, good-hearted thing sticking in the mud of that foot-note. But I have another reason. The Doctor was so much grieved at my having walked so far to so little purpose, that he sent for me yesterday morning to express his regret, which was very satisfactory, and also to send me as far as Firth in his *carriage*, which was much more satisfactory. I have underscored *carriage*, because I had underscored *cart*, and I wish you to set the one against the other; and observe that it leaves a balance in favour of my dignity after all. For I have seriously thought the matter over, and made up my mind to the following effect:—The man who rides in a cart is decidedly below the man who does his journey afoot; but the man who rides in a carriage is decidedly above them

both, and the man who first drives in a cart and then drives in a carriage, leaves himself, in the matter of dignity, precisely on a level with him who has never used any substitute for his legs. There, now, let us dismiss both cart and carriage with a respectful benediction upon them both. (I am going to take a smoke now, for that vehicle business has been so intricate and difficult to manage, that I feel quite exhausted.) . . .

Diary.

Sandwick, Sunday, December 17th.—Dry and breezy. Good audience. *Work and Med.* In the evening read Wordsworth and some other things till bed-time.

Monday, 18th.—Walked across to Birsay; dined there with a very intelligent Mr. Leask, who showed me a Pictish tower, and the old palace of Robert Stuart, who was executed for bad Latin. Got home about 6 p.m.

Tuesday, 26th.—Alarming news to-day about the Cowans, who have Typhus fever; Willie reported dangerously ill. Hope to heaven he will get through.

Thursday, 28th.—Walked in from Stromness to-day. Expected a letter about the Cowans, and, finding none, thought the omen good. Got two newspapers from Webster, and there found the death of poor Willie Cowan! He died on Christmas-day. He was the most loveable soul on earth. This is dreadful.

Friday, 29th.—Quite stupid from that terrible news of poor Cowan. I feel as if in a dream from which I cannot find means of waking. Crossed to the island of Shapinshay in a roaring gale; but could scarcely even forget that death to think of my own danger.

Sunday, 31st.—Wild and stormy—only thirty in church. Preached *Pow.* and *Serv.* Last Hogmanay I was in Ireland. Where shall I be next one? Dead? Living? Settled? The future is veiled, and it is well. "Living or dying may I be the Lord's," and so fare-thee-well '65. Thou hast had a mournful ending—Poor Willie Cowan!

To —— ——.

SHAPINSHAY, *December 31st, 1865.*

. . . . I don't find myself in the mood to write, and I must make my letter a very short one. It is also a very sad one, for I have got, a day or two ago, the dreadful news that my friend William Cowan is dead. White wrote me the week before last a letter, which I only got on Monday, telling me that the two brothers were ill of typhus—that Jack had got the turn, and was gradually gaining a little strength, but that Willie was a much worse case, and was dangerously ill. Of course this news disquieted me very much, and I wrote back to White to send me word immediately how they were. I expected that I should find a letter awaiting me on Thursday when I walked into Kirkwall; and, as I found none, I set it down as a good omen, indicating, at least, that there was nothing of a more serious nature to announce. However, Webster gave me the *Scotsman* of Tuesday to read, and, on turning to the record of deaths, I found that poor Willie Cowan was gone. I cannot tell you how stunned and stupified I have been ever since. I cannot get the thought of it out of my mind, do all that I can. If I walk about, I can't help thinking of the walks I have had with him; and, if I read, the recollection inserts itself between every sentence and paragraph and turning of the leaf. I am quite solitary here too, and the weather is stormy and wild, and, in short, I am very miser-

able. However, even to tell one's unhappiness serves a little to divert it, and so I hope you will excuse me for writing you this unhappy and very gloomy letter.

I didn't tell you at the time that I got a letter in Kirkwall from John M'Intyre, telling me of the death of his brother Duncan, with whom I used to stay in Darlington, and who was also a singularly amiable fellow. These two occurrences have rendered my stay in Orkney very memorable, sadly memorable to me, and I do wish that my stay in it was at an end, To-morrow, if the weather be good, I mean to cross over to Kirkwall and see if there be any letters for me, and to attend the Presbytery, which meets on Tuesday. . . .

To the Same.

SHAPINSHAY, *January 1st, 1866.*

This is New-Year's Day, so let me begin by wishing you a "Happy New Year." . . . I expected to date from Kirkwall, but the weather is so stormy and dismal that I could not think of "crossing the stormy firth to-day," as the chieftain was warned. It has been blowing great guns for four mortal days, and to-day it has culminated in wind, snow, hail, thunder, and lightning, all mingled together in one tempestuous mass. Also, it is bitterly cold—even indoors it is chilling and pinching in the extreme, and, though I am sitting with my greatcoat on, it is as much as I can do to render life tolerable. I am not naturally much more of a coward than most men; but cold has a very demoralising effect, and really it makes me quite unable to regard with anything like complacency the idea of getting drowned in crossing that bit of water; so I have decided to stay and see what kind of weather to-morrow will bring. . . . What have I to speak about on this page? . . . You see

Shapinshay is such an isolated place (it's an island), and the manse where I am staying is so isolated, even from the rest of Shapinshay, and, finally, I am myself so isolated, even in this solitary room in the manse, from which I haven't moved out of doors for three days—in short, to such an extent does isolation characterize everything here, that I have really no news to tell you. Just to show you how little there is, I may mention that the sole noticeable occurrence that has fallen under my eye (and I command a pretty extensive landscape, and *sea*scape too, mind), is the fact that the Volunteers came down to the shore about noon, and fired some nine or ten rouuds from their battery of two guns, and then went away! *Voila tout!*

By the way, I got that interesting document the list (How you love it!) the other day. Besides the Orkney engagements, I see I have to go to Pitrodie and Innerleithen: Pitrodie the second two Sabbaths of February, and Innerleithen the first two of March—not a *very* rich prospect certainly, but we have seen worse in our time—

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

I don't know why I quote that, unless it be in fun. Well there comes another terrible hail-shower, and as my fingers are getting cold I must stop and warm them. . . .

To the Same.

SHAPINSHAY, *January 7th, 1866.*

. . . . Really one never knows what the next five minutes will develop. I was just going to go straight into some very interesting subject or another, when the dishevelled old Eliza before mentioned made her appearance with the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine* and a threatening of supper (both of which I knew quite well were a mere

apology for a *haver*—the cunning old Eliza) and put the whole affair out of my head.

Eliza is a very peculiar little old body. I can scarcely describe her. I have called her dishevelled, and yet there is a certain show of orderliness about her too. She always reminds me of some of the touzie little girls at country schools, bright-eyed and sprightly, with a lock of black hair hanging on their brows and threatening to make them squint all their days. Eliza is like one of these lassies turned all of a sudden forty-five years old. That looks absurd in the extreme certainly; but that does not in the least spoil the description, for Eliza *is* absurd. She has a good deal of shrewdness too mixed up with much nonsense: for mentally as well as bodily she is dishevelled. She has continually-recurring "lucid intervals," so continually recurring as to get mixed up with the other intervals beyond all possibility of disentanglement. She is something like a male worthy beyond the sound there, the Rev. —— —— of ——, concerning whom my friend Henderson remarks with much truth as well as humour, that he is "subject to frequent attacks of reason." When Eliza has a mind for a *haver* she folds her arms and paces to and fro for half an hour or so across the room, talking in her inimitable mixed patois of burr and Orcadian, and in a wavering, uncertain, discursive, desultory manner, on all possible things in Shapinshay and out of it, especially in it. During the last haver, for example, which was quite a short and mild one comparatively, she has managed to touch on about fifty or sixty different points. She has told me about the fate of two broken eggs which were intended by her to be converted into ingredients of a delicious pudding for my dinner to-day, but which were destined to become the prey of the disreputable old grey cat, who waited till every body was into the kirk and the yelling of the first psalm fairly audible,

and then gobbled them up—the blackguard. But how did the eggs happen to be broken? Well that question leads on to another very fertile subject. For the eggs were trampled on by the pet ewe—who is Eliza's sole companion with the exception of the grey cat. She has managed to get as much wool from off the back of the pet ewe as furnished material for five pairs of blankets. A treasure of a ewe! But that is not all: the pet ewe had two pet lambs which sold, the one for two-and-twenty shillings, and the other for three-and-twenty, last summer. And finally (I don't see why this should be marked down as an item in the pet ewe's good character, but Eliza does), the pet ewe had a *brither* who fetched no less than two-pound-five. So far for the usefulness of the animal. But another and intenser interest attaches to the pet ewe. One of my predecessors here was a Mr. —— (—— is a most decent, amiable, unsophisticated soul, as you will find in that record of decent, amiable, unsophisticated souls, the list), who, being fond of the lower animals, made friends with the pet ewe by patting her head and stroking her face. This act of kindness was witnessed by a wicked wretch of a Morisonian, who went and spread a report among the islanders that the "preacher amused himself by riding about the field on the pet ewe's back," and this vile slander, says Eliza sorrowfully, quite spoilt Mr. ——'s usefulness in the place! Then, changing the scene from Shapinshay, she told me of the "lang elder o' ——," Mr. —— by name, (porridge here interrupted the "lang elder," but the story is too good to be broken off that way). Mr. —— is six feet five inches high, and blind of an eye: but for all that he married a very little wife, who had a very little sister—the two littlelest women in all the island of ——. And here comes the point of the story: Mr. ——, the day he was *kirket*, being a gallant man, took the little wife on one arm

and the little sister on the other, and so escorted them both to the kirk. But the people of —— are a satirical generation, and said that "he looked like a man wi' twa pails of water." Eliza also touched upon the devil, but as the subject is somewhat hackneyed as well as serious we will leave it. . . .

To the Same.

PIEROWALL, WESTRAY, *January 11th, 1866.*

. . . . It is a long and tedious sail to Westray, not that the island is really at a great distance, but owing to the number of places that we have to call at, and the doublings and windings which these calls render necessary. We started at eight in the morning in a snow-storm, which recurred at short intervals during the day. Towards evening too, the wind rose, and threatened to blow a gale, and, though the vessel was a very good screw-steamer, we encountered such a tremendous sea on emerging from between the Red Head and the Calf of Eday, and entering the open ocean, which we did just as evening came on, that the captain turned and ran into a little bay called Rapness, and cast anchor for the night. Pierowall, my destination, was eight miles off across the island, but, as there is little or no sleeping accommodation on board the boat, I determined to set out and walk, especially as there was a shoemaker from Pierowall who intended to go too. So the captain sent us ashore in a boat, and we came over the snow to our "respectable places of abode," which we reached about half-past seven. This morning the wind fell, and the steamer got on about noon. Altogether, I enjoyed the trip greatly. We had some amusing passengers aboard (including a "Professor of Magic"), and saw some splendid precipices, with a heavier sea beating on them than usual.

The shoemaker was excellent fun at first, but he got knocked up towards the end of the way. . . .

The following extracts from Davidson's diary will serve to give the reader some idea of a probationer's life in an outlying station in Orkney :—

Pierowall, Friday, 12th January.—Weather, which is all-important here, and therefore I note it, is much as before, a cutting wind, with snow and hail showers. Visited Noltland Castle, a neighbouring ruin, in the forenoon. Wrote Gibson at night. The people here observe the old style festivals yet, and this being Old New-Year's Eve, I had "cakes and ale" (treacle, to be sure), to supper.

Saturday, 13th January.—Thaw and indescribable slush to-day. It is their New-year's Day (O. S.), and the young fellows are playing at football. Indoors the day has been celebrated chiefly by eating; cakes and scones, and buns and shortbread forming the staple food. Walked a mile or two into the country in a dense mist and a drenching drizzle of rain. . . .

Sunday, 14th January.—A fine morning gradually degenerated from clear to misty, and from that to heavy rain with strong wind. Had a very good audience, and very attentive. I will say this for the Orcadians, that I have never been listened to anywhere with more attention—seldom, indeed, if ever, with so much. *Serv. and Tap.*

The earnest attention with which religious instruction is received by the people of Orkney is remarked by all ministers who visit the islands. Dr. Paterson's church in Kirkwall, which accommodates no fewer

than 1700 worshippers, used to be crowded not only on Sundays, but also at extra week-day services such as are held on Fast-days and on the Saturdays and Mondays before and after the celebration of the Communion. On one occasion, at mid-summer, a respected missionary who had returned from labouring in India was engaged to address the weekly prayer meeting. The people, whom Dr. Paterson had taught to take a deep interest in foreign missions, and who had never before had the opportunity of seeing a live missionary, filled the large building to overflowing. The elders waited on the missionary before the service, and said that as the audience was so good he might with propriety give a longer address than is usually expected at a prayer meeting. He said he would speak till it was dark. They replied—"Oh, no, sir, you musn't do that, for it'll no' be dark for six weeks."

Monday, 15th January.—A most tempestuous day—roaring wind and driving hail, shaking the very house. The "Orcadian" came in this morning, and at once returned southward; but the wind being a-head and strong, it is thought she will lie still at Stronsay. Kept in-doors all day, revising a sermon on Proverbs xviii. 24.

Tuesday, 16th.—Mild and beautiful day, of which I took advantage to visit the promontory of Noup Head—a wild headland terminating in a precipice 240 feet high, at whose base the seat beats and foams everlastingly. This spent the forenoon. In the afternoon visited a sick woman, May Davidson by name, who has lain in bed for four years. Finished Wordsworth's *Excursion*.

Wednesday 17th.—Day began well, but got into low spirits about noon, and took a fit of weeping in the evening, and is crying yet. The day being so sombre, I walked to the church-yard in the forenoon. Spent most of the day in reading Wordsworth's prefaces. Mr. Ingram of Eday came by the steamer in the evening.

Thursday 18th.—A fine mild day. The congregation here held their annual meeting, and also agreed to "go forward," as Henderson says. There was a good attendance, and I preached. In the evening the arrival of the *Orkney Herald* let in a gleam of light from the outer world, by which, however, nothing of importance was revealed.

Friday 19th.—Very wild and stormy. Mr. Ingram returned by the boat in the morning to Eday. Spent almost the whole day reading a *Life of Sir Robert Peel.* Ventured across country to the sea on the west side in the evening. Slight twinges of toothache, caused, I suppose, by the terrible draughts.

Saturday, 20th.—. . . . Weather so favourable that, for the first time since my arrival, the post-boat has ventured into Kirkwall. My toothache symptoms have for the most part vanished; but partly laziness, partly fear of cold, partly that *Life of Sir Robert Peel*, kept me in-doors most of the day. Ventured out a little towards evening, and called to see poor May Davidson. May told me she was worse to-day, but is very patient, poor soul. Post-boat not expected to return to-night; if it return on Monday, I shall miss my letters. Wrote a little bit to my sermon at present undergoing extensive repairs. Finished up by reading in the *Golden Treasury* (Palgrave's).

Sunday, 21st.—This has been a uniformly fine day—open and sunny, and breezy and mild. There was a pretty good

audience at the church, attentive too, as usual. In the evening went in to see the Sabbath-School, which is pretty well attended, and addressed them shortly on Prayer. *Work* and *Med.*

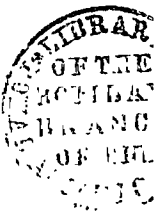
Kirkwall, Monday, 22nd.—Left Pierowall at eight a.m., a beautiful morning, and, after a pretty fair passage, arrived here at seven p.m. Had on board three ministers and a magician.

Bankend, Saturday, 27th.—A beautiful day. There being no appointment for me, it is now settled that I preach here to-morrow (D.V.). Spent the day in a very desultory kind of way—reading desultorily, thinking desultorily, and desultorily dodging about the town. Had tea with Jack. This has been a lively kind of week. It began in Pierowall, Westray, and I have ended it in Jethart. During the course of it I have spent a longer or shorter time in Kirkwall, Wick, Aberdeen, Perth, Edinburgh, and Jedburgh.

His engagements in Orkney were the last of Davidson's more distant appointments, except when he was sent for two Sundays in April to Blackburn in Lancashire. The other weeks of 1866 were spent in wandering from one corner of Scotland to another. In the beginning of February he was at Pitrodie in the Carse of Gowrie, where he complains of the "somewhat inconvenient little aversion of his hostess for tobacco." "I have to smoke outside (February, and no zephyrs!) in the garden." Next day—"I have got permission now to smoke in the session-house." He turned his outside smoke to good account by

composing a valentine, which originally began with the lines—

"My pipe offends my hostess' nose
(Fastidious little body!)
So I must to the outer air,
To smoke it in Pitrodie."



In its revised and amended form these lines were omitted, and it stands thus:—

A LOVE SONG IN WINTER.

(MADE ON SAINT VALENTINE'S EVE.)

'Tis Winter's hour in field and bower,
And woods are moaning drearly;
His minions lurk by cottage eaves,
With daggers gleaming clearly.
But what to me is hail or gale,
Or storm-cloud darkly rolling?
For love he is a potent lord,
Both time and clime controlling!

The very stars that rule this night
With angry influences,
For love of thee they look on me
With soft and kindly glances.
And love of thee, sweet Valentine,
Where'er my footstep ranges,
Brings summer on the land for me
Through all the yearly changes.

He thus sums up his week at Pitrodie :—

This has been a week of the lotus-eating sort, or rather of a lower kind still, to wit, the *vegetating*. Looking back upon it, my reflections resemble what one would consider the "Saturday-night Recollections of a well-grown Cabbage."

On leaving he went to Blairgowrie, to visit the Cowans and weep with them over the untimely death of his friend. The talk of which he speaks in the following extract from his diary was only with the surviving brother, who was also his own friend and fellow-student. It is illustrative of his characteristic reserve on the subjects which lay nearest his heart, that in the family circle he never mentioned the name of the dead.

Talked of him most part of the night till near two in the morning. Went with Jack and saw poor Willie's grave. It lies in a pleasant spot, from which you survey great part of Strathmore. Never felt so sad in my life.

One of his great enjoyments as he journeyed from place to place was talking to the people in the third-class carriages, which financial considerations led him to select. He had there ample scope for the study of character, which his warm human sympathies made an unfailing delight. He loved to hear the simple talk of the farmers about their crops, and of mothers about their far-distant sons. On one of his journeys —it was about the time he visited the Carse of

Gowrie—he was chatting with an old woman who was his travelling companion. She was telling him of where the various members of her family were scattered, and she spoke specially of one son who was a soldier "far away on the banks of the Yang-tsi-Kiang." She seemed to find a satisfaction in the high-sounding name of the distant river. The name filled Davidson's ear, and he could not rest till he had woven it into the refrain of a little comic song, for which he composed a tune. In February, 1869, he thus wrote:—

> O fame and immortality! Why did I almost forget to speak of a notable petition I had the other day from Glasgow, that I would graciously condescend to allow that sublime "Yang-tsi-Kiang" nonsense to appear in a book of Songs for Children, with pianoforte accompaniment! Inscrutable must be the nature of the Glasgovian children if *that* be suitable to their tender years; but the thing is so incongruous and comical and absurd that it gives me the most entire pleasure and amusement to comply. They shall have it.

They had it accordingly, and the song has become popular. It had been used as one of their gathering songs by the supporters of Mr. Carlyle in the contest which resulted in his election to the Lord Rectorship of Edinburgh University. The lively tune, and the chorus, in which the "Yangs" are repeated and multiplied with the most ludicrous effect, adapted it well to this purpose, and it has kept its place as a student's song ever since.

THE YANG-TSI-KIANG.

My name is Polly Hill, and I've got a lover Bill,
But he's caused me many a pang,
For his regiment got the rout, and he's gone to the right about,
To the Yang-tsi-Kiang.

Oh! the war had broken out, though I don't know what about,
But they that make the wars go hang!
For he's gone with thousands ten to fight the China-men
On the Yang-tsi-Kiang.

Oh! it's five years passed away, till it fell on a day,
As I sat by the door and sang,
That a soldier stopped and said, "O your lover Bill is dead
On the Yang-tsi-Kiang.

"It was in a tea-tree glen that we met the China-men,
And one of the rogues let bang,
Which laid poor William low, with his toe to the foe,
On the Yang-tsi-Kiang.

"'O,' says poor Bill to me, 'take this little sprig of tea,
And tell Poll where it sprang.'
Now that was all he said, when his head dropped like lead
On the Yang-tsi-Kiang.

"So here I hand to thee this little sprig of tea,
'Twas by poor Bill's grave that it sprang,
You may keep it if you will, as a souvenir of Bill
And the Yang-tsi-Kiang."

"Now, my soldier boy," says I, "Is there green in my eye
(Pray, pardon me the use of slang),
For I'm still your Polly Hill, and you're welcome home, my
Bill,
From the Yang-tsi-Kiang."

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

DUNBAR, *June 16th, 1866.*

I hasten to fulfil the promise which I made you the other day in Edinburgh—to wit, to write soon.

I was much gratified to learn from your last letter that you had hit upon so productive a seam. To be in the county of Cromarty is of itself an excellent joke. (I may mention that I have myself touched Cromartian ground—at Ullapool "in the west"—as the geography books have it.) But actually to visit the county-town is an achievement of no ordinary kind. In fact, I was under a kind of notion that the last man who had seen the place and returned to the common world to tell the tale, was the late Mr. Hugh Miller: and that ever since his report upon it, the subject had been utterly neglected, and the route by which the town is reached forgotten. I think you might entertain no unreasonable hope of the Geographical Society's Discovery Medal, if you could only snatch a few week's retirement—say in Shetland—to compile a royal-octavo upon "Cromarty, and How I found my way to it."

For myself, I have been leading a very tame and uninteresting life of it for the last quarter of a year or so. Blackburn, Hawick, Berwick, Lauder, Falkirk, Fala, and Dunbar: there is not a more flat, stale, and unprofitable* list on the Church's roll. To tell the truth, I had a slight

* I never like to incur suspicion of plagiarism or blackguardianism, as I heard a man call it. I have taken these words from Shakespeare.

little experience on Saturday evening and Sunday morning, which may be said almost, though not quite, to reach the dignity of a "case." To be sure one of its main recommendations to that character consisted mainly in the incurring of considerable extra expense and physical botheration: but these elements were heightened not a little in their cumulative effect by the addition of a little dash of Sabbath breaking. Not to detain you further on the threshold—the facts are simply these: I came out here on Saturday by the evening train, and reported myself bag, big-coat, umbrella and all to Mr. —— ——. (The counter and himself intervened between me and a row of portly-looking whisky-barrels —in other words, Mr. —— —— is in the spirit line.) He informed me of the existence of much amazement in his mind at my apparition: and as I was not myself conscious of any additional peculiarity attaching to my every-day and wonted appearance, I ventured to ask Mr. —— —— "why?" "To-morrow," said he, "is our communion, and Mr. Fraser of Fala is to preach, while you were expected to be supplying his pulpit." Not much more light could be had on the subject, excepting only so much as served to indicate that the responsibility lay between the Rev. —— —— of ——, who might not have written to me at all, and my landlord at Falkirk, who might have failed to forward his letter. Anyhow the long and the short of the matter was, that I had to retrace my steps to Edinburgh, and (as it was too late to get a train to Tynehead that night) lie with one eye open, so as not to oversleep 5.30 A.M., at which hour I managed to arise and walk to the train. A Sabbath morning stroll of four miles over a pleasant hill, through dewy fields and tuneful larks and linnets, brought me to Fala about half-past eight. Now all this is very tame work, and I begin to thirst for the next volume of the Book of Fate, which, to be sure, may possibly bring with

it more adventure than is either desired or looked for. But as we used to say on the *Continang—Nous verrons.*

I may mention that I have not succeeded in very effectually troubling any ecclesiastical waters since I parted with you in Edinburgh. The fact is—to confuse the story a little—somebody (let me also discard that somebody, and say rather) some impudent man seems always to step down before me. Of course Falkirk was fixed, and at Blackburn it was the height of folly to come after you, and, finally, the little *contretemps* related above has very effectually shunted me on the present station.

However, I am now open for an engagement, as I have told you before, and next quarter I have a good mind to go in *bald-headed* (in fact, sooner or later I will have to do that *nolens volens:* this warm weather is playing frightful havoc on my summit). In other words, I sometimes think that a nearer approximation to Vulcan and Briareus combined, would be a fairish good seam to work. But then, again, it is singular, and perhaps after all fortunate, for one's own private opinion of one's own self, how your resolution collapses when the time comes and Stentor and the steam-hammer fail you "just at the bit." Well I fear "a wide field is opening up," so I will draw off and finish up with a "single word of practical matter."

On Tuesday I mean to effect my escape from Dunbar, and take refuge for two nights in Edinburgh. On the Thursday I mean to give a few hints on fasting at Bathgate, and then move on to Wishaw. There I am to preach on Sunday the 24th, and there I mean to remain during the week. . . .

The visit to Wishaw, to which he was looking forward when he wrote this letter, proved memorable. In his diary for the Sunday (24th June) he notes:—

"An extremely warm day. Several people had to leave the Church on account of the excessive heat." On the Monday he says:—"Terribly *hot*—but I feel that I have caught a *cold!*" He had sat in the summer house too long on the Sunday evening. He was always accustomed to speak of this as the beginning of his weary illness. He called the 24th June the Black Day, and would never write a letter on it. There are frequent indications of cold in his Diary from an earlier date. The minuteness with which he notes the state of the weather, shows that it was of more moment to him than to a man in perfect health. The winter expedition to Orkney must have tried him severely. The long night-walks across boggy moors and in the face of driving storms, the discomforts of lodgings with smoky chimneys and strong draughts, the sitting in shivering rooms—of all which he made so light—were a severe strain on a constitution which was never robust. But it was at Wishaw that he first became conscious of serious trouble. Mr. Bruce thus writes:—"On my return on the Monday I found him waiting for me, and he spent the rest of that week with me up till Friday, if I remember aright. Certainly he took my prayer meeting on the Wednesday evening, and I have the most distinct recollection of the pleasure with which I listened to his sermon, which was quietly, but by no means unimpressively, delivered. That same evening, after supper, we were sitting smoking our pipes in my study. He was looking

over some old numbers of *Punch*, while I was writing a note which I wished sent off by that evening's post. He was coughing slightly at intervals, but before I had finished writing, a *fit* of coughing came on which lasted a good many seconds, and which left him pretty much exhausted. I looked at him, and when he had sufficiently recovered himself, he said in his quiet way and with a smile—'Rather a necropolitan tone that, Bruce?' 'No, no,' I replied. 'Ay, man, there's the ring o' the kirk-yaird about it. It pits yin in mind o' the clap o' the shool.'" It seems strange that one whose natural tendency was certainly not to take a gloomy view of anything affecting himself, should thus early think of the illness by which he had been seized as likely to have a fatal issue. An incident which he related to a friend at a later date, explains why he afterwards thought of that illness with peculiarly gloomy fore-bodings. His friend was urging him to take a hopeful view of his case. Davidson told him that if his sickness should prove a sickness unto death, as he feared it would, it would be a singular fulfilment of a presentiment he had one day when he was a school-boy, that something fatal would befal him on a certain day of a certain year, which day and year he wrote down at the time in an old school-book. The incident had quite passed from his memory for many years, when the sight of the old book recalled it, and on looking at the date which he had written down he found that it corresponded exactly with the day and year in which he caught that cold at Wishaw.

The date was the 24th June, 1866—the "Black day."

In the week following his visit to Wishaw he thus notes the progress of his malady:—Monday—"A cold, which I first felt about a week ago, has to-day become quite pronounced." Wednesday—"Cold rather more tangible and disagreeable." Thursday—"Cold rather better." On Saturday (7th July) he says—"To-day I am twenty-eight years old." Jottings of the same kind are continued till Saturday, 21st July, when we find this ominous entry—"The blister has done little or no good. The cough is no better, and, in fact, after a good round of barking here (Bannockburn) to-night, I brought up a mouthful of blood, which looks not very well." Still he bravely persevered with his work. Indeed, he seems to have become more resolutely active in proportion to the failure of his strength, as if he had recognised in that failure the shadow of the night in which no man can work. In August we find him at West Kilbride still battling with his cold, but showing no sign of any disposition to treat himself as an invalid. He discharges all his professional duties; he explores the neighbouring heights, and visits the surrounding places of interest, groaning, withal, that a companion who has attached himself to him is "a man garrulous, flighty, and quotatious, to the height of utter bewilderment." He begins a sermon on Psalm ci. 1; he reads Masson's *Novelists;* Matthew Arnold's *Essays;* and Howson *On the Character of St.*

Paul. He occupies his mind with questions of great and permanent interest to the well-being of the Church. One of his most faithful correspondents had accidentally come into possession of a fragment of a hymn which he had written on the words "Your life is hid with Christ in God," and had urged him to complete it and another which he had also begun. He thus writes in reply:—

To —— ——.

WEST KILBRIDE, *August 18th, 1866.*

. . . . Finish either of the hymns?—No. I have laid them aside of set and deliberate purpose. I shall write no hymn till I am a minister for years—then, like Bernard de Morlaix, I think I should try to write *one.*

. . . . What do I know yet of the dark side of life, its sorrows and sins and sufferings, that I should put words of song into believers' lips—or unbelievers' either? It is overpowering to be a people's voice to God in prayer. Sometimes I seem stricken half-dumb with the weight. Preaching is nothing compared to it. Finlayson, when at Jedburgh, said to me that I would soon get over that feeling, but I do not, and I am not sure that I should like to get over it—if that means growing callous. The verse is a favourite of mine. It has been full of an eternity of "Rest" to me since the first Sabbath after I left home, when my Bible opened at it. But it was presumption in me to have meddled with it; and, moreover, you know you ought not to have seen it at all. It was written at Aldershott when I was at the sermon, "Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," but it was never used. The life I lead just now is far too hurried to write even an earthward song, let alone a

hymn. You remember amongst your father's old engravings yon copy of "Fra Angelico," with the inscription we made out to be "Painted, at rest, Praying." That is only how a hymn may be written, Argal. . . . But the Missionary Hymn of the Church is to write yet. . . . Your antiquarian semi-growlings over the new kirk at Melrose are amusing. That must have been a window of windows to a small child which let you see the landscape so far; but surely you do not regret the wasps! "Before I count fifty I'll be stung, and I'll try not to scream in the kirk!" *that* may have been pleasure, and it may have been worship. People have different ideas on these matters!

If the congregation needed a new church for room, as you say they did, it is right! In God's name let them build, let them decorate, and be thankful you belong to people who can lend such a heavy hand to the work, and enjoy it when it is done.

The time is past for open-air preaching, How I should have rejoiced to have looked and listened at Stitchel Brae, and my heart does warm to the dear old square tea-caddy churches that our good forefathers delighted to build; they seem to say to me—"We were built by strong-minded men who dared to think;" but now-a-days I must confess to be somewhat of King David's faction. I would not like to dwell, and I do not like to see other people dwell, in "Ceiled houses," while the tabernacle is beneath curtains—*i. e.*, I do not like to see well-to-do people content with a shabby church. I should be willing for the Ark of God to have a double ceiling if it tended to higher decoration, and if it were practicable and of any use. Hymn-making and church-building are very much the same, you see. I would have for God's service the very highest thoughts that the mind of man can conceive, and the very finest work that the hand of man can execute—but for this last *no debt.*

I loathe and abhor debt; but debt on a church!—bah! there is something wrong with the church's Christianity when it cannot balance its ledger with the world.

His state of health had become so serious at the beginning of September that, for the first time since his license, he sought release from an engagement, and rested for two Sabbaths at home. He resumed work, on Sunday the 16th of that month, at Kirkcaldy. "Weather fine and clear. A good audience; but I find my cold prevents me from speaking out sufficiently: besides, I coughed. *Argal*, I have no chance here, for which I don't much grieve—only, one sillily likes to please people."

About the same period there are frequent allusions to another illness which evidently cost him more thought than his own. The health of his mother—who was destined to be his companion and fellow-sufferer through many a weary month of weakness—gave him great anxiety. His letters and diary have many tender references to her state, and often, in the intervals between Sabbaths when he was engaged in distant churches, he would run home to Jedburgh, at a sacrifice both of money and of strength, of neither of which he had much to spare.

To a Brother Probationer.

BANKEND, *October 18th, 1866.*

I found your letter last Saturday night when, after a two miles trudge through mist and drizzle, I reached the hospitable hearth of the Rev. David Inglis. (Pretty good sen-

tence.) And, to begin my reply in the bulletin line, I was sorry to learn that your old foe had again found you out, even in so southern a "spot" as Hastings. I have never mentioned the fact either to friend, foe, or entire stranger: so that, if you are only wise enough to keep your own counsel, I have no doubt that we shall remain the sole depositories of the injurious fact. For it *is* injurious. One's throat and lungs may be called one's bayonet, sword, lance, or Snider-rifle—everything, in fact, except cartridge. And, naturally enough, the "discerning public" would regard us, if materially damaged in those organs, as much in the same predicament as a wretch with only his fists at Sadowa. And now that I have got myself extricated with greater or less credit from that martial figure of speech, let me hasten to close the health-report of this epistle. As for my mother, she is recovering, but very slowly indeed; which, however, was only to be expected. And as for myself, I believe that I also am rather better, certainly much better than when I wrote you last, but, quite as certainly, not so completely better as I ought to be with the prospect before me of gloomy winter, and a November campaign beyond the Dee. With which remarks upon "personal and relative affliction" *(vid.* prayers, *passim)*, I will turn the leaf and seek fresh fields and pastures new. . . .

On the 21st and 28th October he preached in Howgate—"the one vacancy I ever fancied—in the country, and not far from Edinburgh." It could hardly be expected that in his broken state of health he should be successful there, yet there were evidently some in the quiet village church who were able to discern something of the power that lay beneath his unimpassioned manner.

Diary.

Sunday, 21st October.—My voice was rather indifferent to-day, and I had to cough occasionally. Nevertheless, the people were attentive. Spent the evening over the *Provincial Letters*, which I read when a boy.

Wednesday, 24th.—Mrs. Duncan tells me the people had a meeting here on Monday evening about a minister. She says it lies between Thomas and myself. This is possible. Compatible with this possibility, however, is the possibility of my having 4 votes and Thomas 400. *Argal*, let me be humble, and build no castles.

Saturday, 27th.—. . . . The week has been a very quiet and a very agreeable one. I have for the most part led a pleasantly tame and secluded life. Read *Sartor Resartus*.

Sunday, 28th.—This day has been an unmistakeable emissary of winter—very clear, very dry, with a keen wind from the north. The church was well filled, and the people very attentive, specially in the afternoon. Visited an old woman and daughter in the evening.

Stow, Saturday, 3rd November.—Good days and bad days seem to have agreed upon alternation, and take it time about. That is generally called "fair play;" in the present case it is rather fair play and foul by turns. This is a fair and shining day, favourable for travelling. Left home at 4.40 p.m., and *arrove* here all right at 6.30. . . . Read Carlyle's *Heroes* and Sellars' *Roman Poets of the Republic*.

Bankend, Wednesday, 7th.—. . . . To-morrow I set out for the north, and that, alas! with a new "bad cold."

Davidson used to speak playfully of "the supposititious straw that breaks the metaphorical camel's

imaginary back," and the familiar proverb on which he thus improved may fairly be quoted with reference to this winter expedition to the north. It can hardly be doubted that work persisted in when he should have been at rest, and exposure to severe weather when the most genial climate was needed, hastened the development of his disease. The following extracts from his Diary will be read with interest. They reveal how courageous and, it may be added, how reckless he was. There was surely something of the soldier-spirit in the man who could thus unhesitatingly obey his marching orders, when a less resolute heart would have claimed right to halt.

Aberdeen, Friday, 9th November.—A very lovely morning, followed by a day in keeping until four o'clock, when at Stonehaven we dived into cloud and rain and sleet. Find myself comfortably settled down in the far-famed Union Street, at the top of a house, No. 36. Cold now culminating (I hope).

Saturday, 10th.—. . . . About my cold, last night's hope fortunately is fulfilled; it *has* culminated—but it has also, I fear, strengthened my former cough, which needed no reinforcement. An elder, a namesake of my own, called in the evening with a ticket to a soiree, complimentary of the Rev. Mr. Robb, missionary to Old Calabar, at present home here. Have read little or nothing.

Sunday, 11th.—My cold has perversely chosen to "culminate" again! To-day it has returned in a horrid combination of catarrh and coughing, that has made any similitude of pleasure or even comfort impossible. The kirk here is

poorly attended—in fact mostly *un*attended! [Traces here of his reading of Carlyle.]

Monday, 12th.—To-day has been clear and fine, and I walked a mile or two away to the west. In the afternoon called upon the Rev. Mr. M'Kerrow, and in the evening addressed a prayer meeting of only 6 or 7 souls. *Within the last five minutes I have been seized with a slight spitting of blood.* I thought my cold was improving!

Saturday, 17th.—. . . . On the whole I have enjoyed this utterly quiet and undisturbed week very much indeed: no living soul belonging to the Church has crossed the threshold—a great mercy. Have read *David Copperfield* and most of Shelley's longer poems.

Monday, 19th.—Went along to M'Kerrow's, and walked a few miles with him through wind and snow before dinner. Returned home in the evening with Bacon's *Essays* and Carlyle's *Life of Sterling*, which latter I have now begun to read and find interesting. Indeed I have spent all the evening upon it.

Tuesday, 20th.—Spent the forenoon in reading Carlyle and in spitting and coughing, attributable to yesterday's buffeting with wind and defiance of snow. It was a foolish thing to do, but I have been so little used to act the invalid, that I cannot bring myself to sustain the character at all, and claim the allowances and dispensations that are its due. Prayer meeting at night.

Wednesday, 21st.—I have spent the whole of this day in reading, and have finished *Sterling* and half of Schiller—reading also between them one or two of Bacon's *Essays:* a pleasant day on the whole. To-morrow I expect letters from —— and from home, and to learn about that Howgate business: let me expect little!

Thursday, 22nd.—. . . . News also of Howgate. "Blessed are they who expect little, for they shall not be disappointed." Thomas is called. . . .

After leaving Aberdeen he preached for two Sundays in Keith, and then paid a short visit to his old friends in Forres.

Forres, Monday, 3rd December.—Smoked a farewell pipe to-day with Mr. Sellar, and then took the train hither. Found my friends the Berwicks all very well. Mrs. B. a little more silvery-haired than when I first knew her. I received a warm welcome, a welcome to do one's heart good.

This visit was greatly enjoyed, not only by Mr. Berwick and his family, but by other friends in the town who had learned to love the quiet and unassuming student who sojourned for two years among them. The Rev. Mr. Watson speaks most touchingly of the sad impression produced by his changed appearance, which now bore too evident marks of the ravages of disease. He was struck, however, by what was ever a characteristic of Davidson—his power of looking at the humorous side even of his sorest trials. Mr. Watson said to him that he musn't lose heart; Davidson's reply was, "There is no fear of losing my heart if I do not lose my lungs."

On his way south he halted at the manse of his friend Mr. Gibson—

Auchterarder, Thursday, 6th December.—To-day I have

come down for the first time by the great Highland Route —a truly magnificent line of travel it is—a constant succession of wide moors, roaring streams, still lakes, great and solemn mountains. Found Gibson well.

From Auchterarder he went to Glasgow, where he had an engagement to preach. In the course of the week he came to a most important decision—which had it been come to some months earlier might have had the happiest results. The following letter explains the circumstances :—

To —— ——.

GLASGOW, *December 14th, 1866.*

. . . . You have always, I know, suspected me of saying less than the truth about it [his illness], but I have not really done that. The cold with which I went to Aberdeen is now quite subsided, so that the stream, to use a very bold "figur," has now reached its former level. Everybody here is congratulating me on my good looks as compared with the appearance I wore when I was here in summer, or rather in autumn. And yet I am going to retire into private life for a month or two, so as to let the rigorous season pass over, and to collect strength for the future.

To explain this resolution, I will tell you a plain unvarnished tale on the subject: and in case you should think it very serious and get frightened about it, which there is no reason for doing, let me just let you know, in the first place, that I have at length "seen a doctor" as you call it, no less a man than Professor Gairdner, the greatest authority in this "Great Commercial Centre"—and he assures me, after a very thorough examination, that my chest is still unaffected

and that I have no reason for uneasiness: my system, however, he says is in a low state, for my blood has got very much impoverished. What made me take this step was that while in Aberdeen, and labouring under that cold which I told you about, I coughed up a little blood—don't be alarmed—when I was writing a letter one night. I stopped, of course, for a little and spat it out, and then finished the letter; though I believe I *did* miss a word or two in the process, and then went to bed and felt no more of it. I went to Dr. Gairdner on Tuesday last, and he examined me carefully, with the result I have told you above—and of course with the knowledge of the said blood-spitting. Well last night I dined with Easton, and after dinner what should I do but cough up a little more of the same. Dr. Gairdner had told me to walk a good deal, and to take some medicine which he prescribed for enriching the blood. Now I believe I had overdone the first part of the Doctor's recommendation, and overstrained myself. However, in case anything should be wrong, I have been at the Doctor again to-day: he examined me again as carefully as ever, and told me still that my chest was all right, and that the blood-spitting was nothing serious, but would be quite cured as I get stronger. *Voila tout!* Now.

• Before retiring from duty he had yet one engagement to fulfil. His diary has the following entries:—

••

Of all places in the world, Clackmannan, Saturday, 15th December.—Came to Stirling to-day with Gibson, and after waiting some time there, continued to this place. They seem to be thoroughly in the hands of revivalists here: I am

lodged in the same room with an Evangelist. I hope I love the Evangel: but I don't know about *these* Evangelists. This one is a feeble brother. He inquires "if there is any *stir* in Glasgow?" and seems to carry on a kind of warfare against an invisible tricksy, practical joker, whom he terms "The Old Boy." Oh, for Monday! Have read nothing this week.

Sunday, 16th.—Weather clear and beautiful, which showed the Ochils in perfection, and made me deem them the very beautifullest hills I have looked upon. My friend in great feather. Preached to a very few in the forenoon and to a few more at night.

There is a mournful interest attaching to this simple record. It tells of his last Sabbath's work. The retirement from duty, which he intended should only be for a month or two, proved final. He was never able to preach again. He closed his ministry with one of the sermons he had written at Stornoway two years and six months before—"Behold I stand at the door and knock." It was evidently a special favourite. He had preached it many times and in many places in the course of his wanderings. It was an appropriate last-word to be spoken by one who in his public life never magnified himself, but was ever—though quietly, not the less deeply—in earnest that the hearts of his hearers should be opened to receive Him who is "the Way and the Truth and the Life."

It would be unjust to Davidson—it would be even more unjust to the church which he served

—to represent him as having been a professional failure. The fact that he did not receive a call is neither to be attributed to his lack of power as a preacher, nor altogether to lack of ability, on the part of the congregations to which he preached, to discover and appreciate his gifts. He was only two years and a-half on the probationer's list. For nearly the half of that time he was in failing health. Even in ordinary circumstances the Church allows six years of probation, and never writes a man a failure till that time has expired. When Davidson was licensed the circumstances were extraordinary. The number of candidates for the ministry was so greatly in excess of the number of vacant charges that the opportunities of real candidature given to each probationer were necessarily very few. Most of his ablest contemporaries were nearly two years on the list before they were settled. In fact the present scarcity of Theological students is in large measure to be ascribed to a natural reaction from the state of matters which reached its climax in the years of Davidson's probation. It is, of course, undeniable that men utterly his inferiors were preferred before him. He was aware of that fact, but he did not allow it to embitter his spirit. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, either under a system of popular election or a system of patronage. There will probably always be a majority of people who will be more impressed by high-sounding phrases and striking delivery, than by

quiet thoughtfulness and true culture. Two of the most distinguished preachers of recent years were probationers for a longer time than Davidson. Candlish nearly lost heart, and was about to leave the country before a sphere of work was found for him; and Edward Irving never got a charge in Scotland, but had to carry his great gifts to London before they were discovered. It is not pretended that Davidson would ever have developed pulpit power like that of either Candlish or Irving. He had neither the physical energy nor the intense dogmatic convictions which were characteristic of both; but, if some quiet sphere had been found for him, he would, as a preacher, have commanded the respect of thoughtful men, and would have done something to mould the thought of his church and time, and as a pastor he would have been faithful and greatly beloved. The Church would do well to consider whether there is any way in which she could secure to her service powers like his, which do not count for much among vacant congregations on the outlook for showy and popular gifts.

Before closing this chapter, which consists so largely of descriptions of people whom he met in his journeyings, it may be well to give some extracts from letters which, for obvious reasons, could not be inserted in their chronological order:—

Specially would I note one man—scarecrow, I mean—by the name of ——,—gaunt, bony, seedy, duddy, with a round mouth and perpendicular hair—I mean *vertical* hair—

the minister, if one may call him so, of a wretched little place called ——. . . . —— of —— (for he generally goes by that name) is what the English young ladies would call a "cure." He invited me to call and refresh myself at his house, which lies on the way side, and as the journey is one of some fifteen or sixteen miles, the thing is decidedly convenient. I said I would. However, I met the "cure" when I had scarcely got a mile on my march, conducting a case into —— in a cart, for a medical consultation. I confess I was a little disappointed, for I had intended to study the domestic habits of the creature a little. However, he stopped and shook me very warmly by the hand, and directed me "just to walk in and—as they expected me—I would find everything ready;" and he gave his stomach an eloquent thump with his left paw in a way that suggested roast beef at least. He again abused my right hand and right arm cruelly, gave a jerk of his under jaw and spasmodic twitch of his lips and cheeks, that set all his face and even his ears in motion, by which laborious operation Mr. —— executes a smile; and then hied him after the cart containing the case. I resumed my march, too, and by and by reached his house.

A brother of strange aspect, the skin of whose face was yellow and wizened, whose nose was like the "tower of Lebanon," and the rays of whose eyeballs did differ in direction, as if one should stand upon that tower and look with one eye down the valley of Jordan, and with the other behold the billows of the great sea.

This is really very "aggravating." He would insist on my going with him to-day to a funeral, in order that he might point out a new route for my daily walks. I have had my eye upon that funeral—speaking in a metaphor—

in fact I meant to utilise it—still speaking with reverence—and to take advantage of his absence at it to finish this present epistle. But he *would* have me to go, and so at length go I did: and thus this "golden opportunity," if one may so name a funeral, was lost. However, better luck has come with a later hour: it is now about seven o'clock (p.m. of course), and I am sat down to put another arm on this windmill. For "Fortune, to show that, if she have wrinkles on her brows, she hath also dimples on her cheeks," has so arranged the mutual relations of the Fauna and the Flora of this particular locality, that the snails every evening make a raid *en masse* upon the brairding annuals. These raids are incredibly destructive, notwithstanding the rather phlegmatic movements of the individual snail. Like the Devil, the snail effects his mischief by force of numbers. The bearing of all these circumstances upon this present writing lies in the fact that —— sallies out every evening and makes havoc of his soft enemies. He stabs them with a long needle or skewer, stringing his victims on the weapon, and when he has "bagged" a matter of forty or fifty of these "small deer," he sticks the whole affair—skewer and skewered—into the ground, and calls the attention of all visitors to it as "the prettiest flower in his garden." I always make a show of indignantly denouncing this mode of gibbeting alive—swift execution, of course, is necessary and laudable; but, after all, I never can get up a great amount of steam on the subject: you see, snails, to tell the truth, are not so highly organised as to command very much compassion, and I am not sure that even the "Society for the Prevention," etc., would ever think of making a case of —— and his skewered snails. However, it is comforting to reflect that at the present moment he is gone into the garden, mad upon the slaughter of his enemies, and that the evening seems just of that delightfully moist turn of mind

that Mr. Snail can most sympathize with. They will be in great force, and I don't know that one skewer will be enough for the slain: I hope not. . . .

He believes himself to bulk very large in the eyes of all the parish, and in those of all beyond it who have ever seen or known him. He believes all the good and righteous watch and approve his welfare, and that all the wicked and froward are continually plotting evil against him, or rejoicing when it befals him from any other source. He believes that all the women, whether they be wicked or righteous, are setting their caps at him. He believes that the importunity of the remarriageable widows in the parish will put his bachelorhood in peril of forcible abolition: that their hungering eyes are continually fixed upon the manse door, and their hearts perpetually filled with schemes and resolves about the storming of it. Strangers of the female sex, he believes, come from far to spend the summer with friends from whose epistles they have heard of him and his singleness. Then, in another line, he is continually believing that any stranger of the male sex who enters his kirk-door on a Sunday has heard of his fame at the ends of the earth, and has come all the way thence on purpose to hear him preach. He believes every soul within the four walls hangs flutteringly on his lips, and answers like a flute the wind of his eloquence. (N.B.—His sermons *are* very good; although I mean on Sunday only to touch on the blemishes.) All the while Clodpole is clodpoling as usual, with his head on his palm, and palm and head rising and sinking together as they have done ever since Noah preached righteousness, and just as they will do till the last of his descendants is put to sleep by a drowsy preacher on a June Sunday.

CHAPTER V.

The Invalid.

AT the close of 1866 Davidson returned to Jedburgh, in the hope that a few weeks, or at most months, of rest would recruit his strength. He had prepared himself for spending the period of retirement pleasantly and profitably by obtaining, as he passed through Edinburgh, a stock of books from the College Library. He resolved to study the early English dramatists, and his first weeks at home were spent reading Marlowe, Greene, and Ben Johnson. A request from a friend that he should give his views on hexameters in connexion with Homeric translation, gave him further congenial occupation, and in the course of the first week he wrote a long letter of eight pages on the subject, which, unfortunately, has not been preserved. His Diary is closed with the following entry :—

Monday, 31st December.—The old year has wound itself up, in respect of weather, with a neat little thing in snow-storms. . . . I don't know very well what to say by way of

epitaph upon this same old year. He has not been such a very bad year to me, nor yet such a very good one either, seeing he has laid me on my back this way. But, as he isn't clean dead yet, I daresay it will only be decent to wait till to-morrow before I pronounce upon him finally. It looks ghastly to write epitaphs on the living!

This is the last of the Diary, by the help of which we have been able to trace the course of his wanderings. From this time he was destined to live what he called a "level life," with hardly enough of incident to make the writing of a diary interesting. He always shrank from giving any record of his inward experience; and his outward history was henceforth only diversified by periodic aggravations of his chronic trouble, by occasional journeys at distant intervals, undertaken in the hope that change of air and change of scene might do him good, and by visits from old friends, which were always welcome so long as he had strength to bear them. His letters, however, supply us with abundant material for completing his biography. His power as a letter-writer seems to have grown as his strength declined. The best of his letters hitherto were written when (as in Forres, in Ireland and in Orkney), he was isolated from his friends. The intense friendliness of his nature made communion with them a necessity, and moved him always to write with care. During his long retirement his affection for those with whom he had been associated in the occupations and enjoyments of health grew deeper month by month. He watched the movements of former fellow-

students and companions with deepest interest. He rejoiced in their prosperity, and he wept with them in their sorrow. It was not, therefore, wonderful that his letters should become more numerous and more remarkable. He was growing alike in insight and in power of expression. His old humour never failed him, even in the darkest days, and with it there was manifestly a deepening wisdom and a richer culture of heart and mind. The same intellectual and spiritual growth is shown in the verses he wrote in these later years. In comparison with his earlier productions, those which are to be given in this chapter clearly belong to a new epoch of his mental history. The singer has become the thinker. The music of his verse has lost nothing of its early sweetness, but it now touches deeper chords. He had said of affliction in one of his sermons—

> We shall find that pain itself and deep adversity do not visit us empty handed, but may even leave larger treasures behind them than prosperity itself. We shall find that the pleasantest dreams do not always hover over pillows of down. For have we not heard of one who rested his head upon a rock of the desert and beheld the angels of God ascending and descending between earth and heaven, and how the vision sanctified unto him his own life and the place itself for ever? We shall find that the house of mourning may be "none other than the house of God, and the very gate of heaven." We shall be enabled to say to all affliction, "Thou art a teacher come from God."

These words seem prophetic of his own experience.

To ADAM HENDERSON, ESQ.

BANKEND, JEDBURGH, *January 8th, 1867.*

I duly received your intimation of your little daughter's untimely removal, and I need not say how sorry I was to learn that her illness had ended so sadly.

You will both miss her sorely: for indeed the Providence that measures out to us our various experiences intends that such loses *should* be felt. At the same time God is good—good in all things, and sorrow by his merciful ordering goes ever hand in hand with consolation. To divorce them utterly from one another lies with ourselves alone; and with you I hope and believe they will suffer no such separation as that.

In the midst of your own loss, it is some consolation to remember that she whom you lament has lost but little, and gained infinitely much. I believe there are very few of us who would choose to live life as we find it over again: and this is indeed only to say that an early death is personally an advantage rather than an evil. And looking from the little she has lost to the much that she has gained, it is an unspeakable comfort indeed to remember that your child is with the angels of God—with God Himself, and the Christ that died for us all. This mortal life at the best is but "shadow and shine, flower and thorn;" she lives where there is neither shadow nor thorn, and where the sunshine and the flowers are fairer and sweeter.

You do not mourn either for one whom you have lost for ever, you do not mourn as those that have no hope of meeting again. With our hope of Eternal life we can, none of us, help binding up instinctively the hope of meeting and mutually knowing, and being known of, those that have gone before.

It should also afford you some little solace in the midst

of your sadness to remember that you have the sympathies of many friends; and among others I would very earnestly assure you that you have mine.

After all, however, we can do very little to comfort one another in such circumstances as yours. God Himself can do much; and indeed the most that *we* can do is only to remind one another of *that*. I pray, therefore, that you may be blessed with a sense of the nearness and the goodness of Him who is the binder up of all bleeding hearts, the Supreme Consoler of all them that suffer and yet hope.

With kindest regards to Mrs. Henderson and yourself, and hoping to hear from you soon, I am, etc.

His studies and his letter-writing were alike interrupted toward the close of January by a severe illness which lasted nearly a month, and left him very weak. The nature of the illness is referred to in several of the following letters, and more particularly described in one dated April 22nd.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *February 6th.*

I am again sorry that you have had to wait for your letter: the reason is still a bilious one. I thought I had begun to improve when I wrote you last, but I had begun to do no such thing. And ever since I have suffered under a virulent attack of the Doctor. This has reduced me to the low, mean, and contemptible weakness of taking breakfast in bed for the last six or seven mornings. This is very humiliating, and not to be hinted at in Gath or Askelon. On Sunday the Doctor told me I had begun to mend. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *February 15th.*

During the last two or three days I have walked out into the orchard. My success in these efforts has been rather meagre, but the very fact of my being able to go out at all is proof of the fact that I am improving. I was surprised and pleased last Saturday evening by a visit from White. He knew that I had been out of sorts, for he wrote me about a fortnight ago urgently desiring to know how I was getting on. He stayed till the Monday morning, and you have no idea how much his company served to stir me up.

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

BANKEND, *February 20th.*

. . . . I suppose I need not condole with you over your defeat at ——. . . . The fact of the matter is, you—and I take the advice to myself as well—must go in for the cultivation of the softer graces of oratory, the milder turns of argument and rhetoric. Let a few stalwart thumps represent the more substantial and robust. We must use the *argumentum ad fœminam*, and convince both sexes: for in these times, whatever may have been the case long ago, men as beings preached to, have an amazing amount of the woman about them—I mean of the weaker part of the woman.

These are my general admonitions; you may put them into practice if you like at ——, where I suppose you at present to be "labouring," although I don't mean to insinuate that —— is worse than other places, or even as bad as many.

You will find Mrs. ——, if she be still at the manse, a swift, sudden, strenuous, and not unkindly woman; and I hope you will tender her my regards, and my hopes that her children and herself are well.

Mr. —— ——'s you will find to be a very convenient, let us even say a heaven-appointed place, for smoking a comfortable and comforting pipe of tobacco; and Mr. —— —— himself a gentle and genial and conversable soul. He is no great walker.

From your brother Adam, of whose loss I was exceedingly sorry to learn, I had a letter some days ago, and I will write him shortly. Probably Adam would hint at a certain Clackmannan engagement: into that I am too dull to enter at present; perhaps I may not have forgotten it next time we meet.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *March 3rd.*

. . . . You wheedled me into a corner in your last letter, as if you had quite a secret to tell me, and the upshot was that after all you only meant to advise me to write short letters. Well, I am sure such deception very well merited to be punished with disobedience on my part, and the infliction of eight pages at least; and yet I am going to be so much a Christian and a forgiver of offences as to obey! Behold the reforming effect of bile and pill boxes—in other words, of indisposition. Before I was afflicted I went astray and wrote long letters; but now I keep the commandments and write short ones. And while I am on that wearisome topic—affliction—I will put you at your ease about my convalescing process, which continues to go on successfully, though not quite at steam speed—a speed, in fact, which is not to be expected. I did a very decent spell of walking on Sunday—a half-mile. . . .

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

BANKEND, *March 7th, 1867.*

. . . . I must condescend upon your "gospel

call."* Really it's a great case! and I feel as if I could not congratulate you sufficiently, or speak out with sufficient emphasis the pleasure I have felt from hearing of it. Elliot of all men was the first to tell me about it. He came out here to see me a fortnight ago, on a Monday morning, and told me he had seen it in the *Review*, a copy of which he had with him. So, having identified you by means of the W. T. which were duly given, we proceeded to felicitate ourselves. It is a very covetable place, and of all the *vawcancies* is perhaps the one I should have selected for myself, if only we had had the liberty of choice, which to be sure we haven't (what a pity). To tell the truth, it is the first place I ever did covet; for I was there a number of years ago, just when Leckie was about to be placed. . . .

To the Rev. JOHN MACINTYRE.

BANKEND, *April 22nd, 1867.*

I am utterly, even deliberately idle! and that is the sole reason why I have allowed a whole month to pass before answering your letter, and returning thanks for your kind invitation. If you or any other man expect me to write by return, or otherwise than very leisurely, you make a very great mistake, I assure you. Why, a man might as well be busy!—and just at this present time that is a condition which both my soul and my body abhor. If Gibson was true to my instructions before he went down to Paisley in December, and to his own assertions when he came back, then he must have given you the real reason why I did not accompany him; it was for no other reason than that I had knocked myself up by too much trudging to and fro the streets (none of the cleanest) and up and down the stairs (which are of

* The phrase used by Presbyteries when a call is presented. They "sustain it as a regular gospel call."—ED.

the steepest) of Glasgow; and that I feared farther exertion might lay me upon my back permanently in the west. That would have been inconvenient. I have also been lying under the delusion that Gibson on the same occasion would tell you of my intention to retire for some time from the list; but when your letter led me to think of the circumstances again, I did remember that it was only during the time that he was absent in Paisley that I finally and definitely made up my mind on the matter; and the same reason that kept me from Paisley led me to withdraw from the list. I had been going on from one cold to another—carrying, of course, a little of the old forward with me to the new, and at length I could not help seeing that if I wished to advance in any direction other than cemetery-wards, the sooner "I went bald-headed" for plain *shelvation* the better. And I shelved myself accordingly. I shelved myself shortly before Christmas; I am on the shelf still, and whether or no Fate is going to put sides, ends, and a lid upon it does not yet appear very clearly. . . . Probably I would have been on the list again ere this time of day, if I had only got fair play, for during my first month of retirement I went on as well as I could desire. But at the end of the great storm in January I was forced suddenly to expose myself with very little protection to the cold, and was *nailed* once more. I was caught this time between cold and bile, which two fiends, when rolled into one, seem to form a third devil worse than themselves. His place in creation will lie about midway between influenza and bilious fever; he is not so mild as the one, nor quite as fierce as the other, and yet he possesses a shrewd share of the bad points of both.

But what appeared to be worse even than the disease, was the cure, not that the method followed in my case was at all different, so far as I am aware, from the common practice,

but only that the next worst thing to being killed outright by any ailment is to be cured by the physician. The family doctor fell upon me, armed with a box of most remorseless pills, and in little more than a week reduced me to a condition which was not merely *lean*, but utterly fleshless. This barbarous man, I cannot help thinking, must have had in his eye Sydney Smith's well-known warm-weather joke about "taking off one's flesh, and sitting in one's bones." Of course this is well enough for a joke, but it makes uncommonly sad earnest, even when, as in my own case, a man is still allowed his skin to hold them together. In short, this man left me as lean as the proverbial whipping-post, fishing-rod, flagstaff, or any other symbol of emaciation that the most starved fancy could suggest. To give him his due, however, I must be honest enough to own that what he left of me was quite cured; in fact, it could scarcely be otherwise, seeing my complaint was neither a skin disease nor a bone one!

During all this tedious business I have continued to strive after philosophic content as well as I could; of course I do not flatter myself at all that I realised my own aspirations in that respect, for occasionally I was, beyond any doubt, cross and ill-natured. Perhaps I should have succeeded better if I had consented to lie in bed; but then I have never lain a day in bed for over twenty years, and a man sets a certain foolish value upon being able to make a boast of that kind; and I was naturally unwilling to pull down in a day what had taken twenty years in building, and could not be reared again in less. I persisted, therefore, in rising every day and dragging myself painfully to the chair in the chimney-corner, where I have been on view gratis any day these two or three months. For several weeks this was a very trying process, I can tell you; but as it got gradually easier, I began to amuse myself with reading the old dramatists, Greene,

Marlowe, and Ben Jonson, whose works I had by good fortune brought with me from Edinburgh University on my way home before Christmas. And so for many weeks I have sustained myself upon these same fellows and Shakespeare, in the way of reading; besides the *Scotsman*, which I get every morning (and which I was never quite past reading), and the *Spectator*, which I get every Monday from a good Samaritan in Edinburgh.

I am now, however, to some extent independent of these means of keeping one's mind alive, as I am able to go out and move about the country again to some extent—an extent which fortunately grows daily wider. It is only about a week since I walked about a mile for the first time since January, and already I take walks of three or four; so that I expect soon to make up what ground I have lost during this fit of illness. The cough still remains to be cured, for the rest of my ailment was only an episode, and now I mean to settle down strenuously to the endeavour to get rid of my old enemy. For this I look, not without hope, to the good weather which the month warrants me to look for soon; and I do so with the larger hope that I have already benefited by the decent weather of the last week or two. So much for the matter of health and sickness. You asked in your letter for "explanations," and if you have drawn on yourself a bulletin by way of answer, it is nobody's fault but your own. Let me only thus far allude once more to the subject; if I do by the month of June attain anything like reasonable ground for believing that I have got beyond immediate danger of the "abhorred shears," I will not fail to present myself at your house-heating. I congratulate you, in the meantime, on the prospect of having a house to heat; see that you rule it well when you get it! I wonder whether mine be built yet, or whether I am to be a nomad, a "plain man dwelling in tents," till the final clap of the inevitable

shovel. That, however, is entirely a speculative matter, and I never was given to speculation; therefore I drop it, and begin to think of winding up this long epistle. The longest epistle has an end; even love letters, I am credibly told, have their conclusions. Luckily I recollect, just in time, your enquiry as to whether I expect to be in Edinburgh in May. I am not at present quite sure about my movements during that month. It is possible I may be in Edinburgh, and it is possible I may be in Berwick; but there is time for you to write and me to reply before the time comes which you refer to. It is an easy matter for a man who is habitually busy to write—much easier than for myself who am habitually idle, as I have already declared. You are busy already, and to write me a moderately long letter will make you so very little busier, that you will barely be conscious of any difference! And now I commend myself through you to all your friends at Paisley. I hope I may see them in June. Commend me also to my friends in Baillieston, and believe me, &c.

In those days John Cowan, brother of Davidson's dead friend Willie, wrote to the following effect:—

I have dreamt about you several times lately, but last night I dreamt of you and Willie, and awoke crying. I thought we were sliding together on ice, mere boys, full of fun and laughter, when suddenly first Willie, then you, went off the slide on the ice, which broke, leaving both to sink, and me utterly paralyzed and powerless to help you. No doubt the hard work of the session has so excited my brain that even in sleep it will not be at rest. I hope there is yet a long time "on the slide" both for you and me. But, Davidson, don't you think this country and its slides are tiresome and wearying—wearing young brains old by the

regular college mills invented for that purpose? Would not we all be strong and well, healthy and happy, in some young uprising country? Think of you and Willie and me as sturdy back-woodsmen, setting out rejoicing on a fine Canadian morning, to do the clearing of our own acres, each with a mighty hatchet over his shoulder, a song in his mouth, and strength through all his stalwart frame, believing with David that—

> "A man was famous and was had
> In estimation,
> According as he lifted up
> His axe thick trees upon."

How happy we would have returned to our wigwam and log fire by night. What talks, what smokes, what sleeps! No dreams then, old man. No death, perhaps—not so soon at any rate. You and Willie would have both been well. I would not have been in this perpetual "mill," anxious about daily bread.

To which Davidson—after delay—sent the following reply:—

BANKEND, *May, 22nd, 1867.*

My Dear Jack,—Let me try at once to put you in tolerable humour by owning frankly that you are an ill-used man. Indeed, I have owned as much already behind your back, in a note to Elliot which I wrote yesterday. If you doubt my word (which you have every reason to do, I confess) ask him. In the same note I stated that I had sworn a solemn oath to write you to-day, and now "for my oath's sake" I am begun. That is rather a Herodian motive for a Christian man to confess to; but in justice both to myself and you, I think it right to advance some claim to the possession of a

somewhat better one, to wit, considerations of sheer gratitude and duty. I have had slightly *severe* times of it for some time past, and I have never read the long letter you were good enough to send my way (and I have read it very often) without silently thanking you that in the midst of your own troubles and worries you had found time to remember me and mine.

And now that I have got a fresh page before me, let me proceed to liberate from its confinement the statement on the other side that I have thrust into parentheses. I *have* read your letter very often—much oftener than one does read letters—*love* ones, perhaps, excepted. I have read yours so often, because it is not a letter of the common sort, and, of course, it could not on that account be answered in the common way—that is to say, right off, without premeditation, eyes shut and *bald headed*. That is what I have felt every time I have read it, and so, Jack, from one point of view you must really regard my long delay as a downright compliment!

June 14th.—All men are subject, Jack, to visitations of ill-luck; you and I are of course no exception to that vexatious rule; and among the minor strokes of that unwelcome visitor is the fact that I was interrupted just at that word "compliment," and quite prevented from resuming that day. You know how difficult, because distasteful, it is to resume to-day the letter which you commenced yesterday; and also how difficult it is to resume a former humour or state of mind. I thought I was "in the humour," as it is phrased, for writing you that day, and I have delayed beginning again in the hope that the humour might make a casual return. "The humour" has *not* returned—the mountain has not come to the false prophet—so I "sit down doggedly."

Your notion about the helps to good behaviour that abound in the Backwoods, or at least about the absence there of

temptations to peccability that are familiar to us here, tickled me, and tickles me still a good deal. It tickled me so because I have been acquainted with him intimately—he made up to me in almost that identical garb a good while ago—say ten years since—

> "When I was young and in me proime,
> Just ajid twenty-wan"—

as the poet sings (or less it may be, for I praise the sweet heavens I am still on *our* side of thirty). The moral I draw from the matter is, how like to each other are the children of men! how unfailingly, under all minor differences, is to be found the same *make!* I used to think that these forebodings about the future (for if you look at your motive for coveting Back-wood facilities for the practice of virtue, you will find that it rises out of that) were the peculiar and private enemy of only the somewhat superior fellows—that the *ruck* were never confronted by them at all. Of course one was all the readier to adopt the notion from having a sly little squint at a strictly logical inference concerning one's personal self to be drawn from it. "*I* must be a—h'm—h'm—superi—ah—well!" I hold now the belief that to all men, if they get fair play, in a way dimmer or clearer as the case may be, there comes a time when Duty and Fate look upon them out of the future with unlovely and uninviting faces. To be sure they are only images projected upon the future by ourselves. But then the time I speak of comes always early, when imagination in proportion to our other powers is stronger than it will ever be again, and when our notions have an appearance of solidity about them which will become flimsier and thinner by and bye. Anyhow, the phantoms are there—and very efficient phantoms they are too. You will be shrewd enough, I fear, to draw another inference from the fact of the haunting being universal—to

wit, that if the thing be so common there must be some possibility of devising an effectual manner of dealing with it, or, at any rate, a recognised way of theorising about that manner. In short, you are ready to put the question, What, then, is to be done? Well, Jack, I do not profess to be a very wise man; I am not a good man either. I do profess to have a good deal of dumb sympathy with men, but it *is* mostly of the dumb sort. For heaven's sake, don't rely much upon me in the way of counsel. I believe the art or science of dealing with those phantoms might have been a good deal further advanced by this time of the world's day, if only we had all been wise and orderly. But, then, though we must all wrestle with the phantoms, we wrestle in such a confused, blind, and undisciplined way, that we can give little or no account of it—of our method—to one another. I remember very well how, when I was at college, I used sometimes to go up to the Castle-esplanade and devote half-an-hour to the indulgence of very intense envy of the good fortune of the soldiers who were getting drilled there. I used to think how easy it was for these men to go their daily round of duty: it was a very narrow round; and even in the event of one's will faltering a little in the midst of it, there were so many efficient means of compulsion to help one on, *nolens volens*—sharp bayonets swiftly at one's breech, and effectual beyond resistance! Still, I wasn't such a goose but that I could perceive *that* wasn't the way to get rid of my ghosts; and it is probable I shall never "take the shilling" now. It was only an imaginary and quite unreal way of turning one's back upon them—one's back, "for which," says Christian in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, "one has no armour." I do believe, Jack, that the phantoms only arise to punish us for longing "to be wise above what is written" with respect to our own fortunes. Practically, the only bit of our record that is yet written is our past; we

must not expect to find other laws (contradictory, I mean) ruling in our future. If we begin to conjecture about the existence of such, up start our phantoms. Isn't it better, then, to mind our present more, and let our future more alone. Of course we must not work blindly either, nor without plan or end. But I think that most of us learn from our past that there is a very close connection between the manner in which we do our duties and the manner in which we endure our fates. If we have been given to error and prone to shirking, no good fortune can succeed in making its sweetness felt by us; and the worst of haps only brings to play upon us the maximum of its force when it is joined from within by conscious desert of evil. In short, Duty is like Kempion's Dragon,—she puts on beauty if we only embrace her; and if Duty be thus propitiated by obedience, she will take half their terrors from the features of Fortune. Now, if we only have faith in what our past has taught us on the matter, we will not trouble ourselves so much with peering into the future, nor torment ourselves with the fear that other principles and other relations between Doing and Enduring will be prevalent *there.* I have just paused to throw my slipper at a chicken which has invaded my den; and, having thus stopped, I have availed myself of the pause to read over what I have written. I say with Pilate, "What I have written I have written;" but I also say not with Pilate, "What vehement stuff is this?" It strikes me also you may be led to suppose from what I have written here, that the above is the plan I have always followed in fighting *my* ghosts. That will be very erroneous. I often think I have made an utter mess of the whole campaign; but still I do profess to have had a few disjointed experiences that have led me to believe these things true. That is all. Also, this thing is true and beyond doubt to me, that the

thing cannot be done well, nor at all, if it don't be done religiously.

Monday.—Another interruption, Jack, led me to believe that the best thing to do with this letter—

"Which like a wounded snake drags its slow length along"—

would be to burn it, seeing I was to be in town so soon. I spare it, however, and add to it the finishing touch, that it may inform you of the fact that I mean to be in Elliot's to-morrow evening about six or seven, *en route* for Auchterarder and fresh air. When it has acquainted you of that fact, do for the love of heaven and me burn it, for I am ashamed of its *preachiness*.

About the middle of June he found himself strong enough to seek change of air and change of scene. He paid a visit of nearly two months to his old fellow-student, Mr. Gibson of Auchterarder.

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

AUCHTERARDER, *June 29th, 1867.*

I am not voluminously given in the way of letter-writing: I believe I never was, even when I mingled most in the company of active men, and I find that private life tends still less than one that was public so far, to set one's pen going. One thinks about his friends as much as ever—perhaps more—but, then, one's thoughts only run round after each other—"so have I seen" a dog's head chasing his tail: in both processes there is a certain want of progress. Now, to-night, for once, I have got out of that condition. Meditating in Gibson's garden upon the fact that this is Saturday evening, and then on the other fact that Gibson is now

alongside of the weekly task, wrestling with his own reluctancies and the necessities of to-morrow, I found my thoughts flying Clydewards to the "Great Com. Cen.," resting for a moment upon the hideous and seething aggregate of sermonic pangs which one's imagination on a Saturday evening conjures up at the very name of Glasgow, and finally settling down and folding their wings upon Cumbrae. It will be Monday when you read all that, and you will probably be able to smile over it. We can talk about ghosts at noonday without terror. However, I begin to perceive that from the time you have now been settled, there will be still a few survivors (even though you have written no new ones)—a few of that good host with which, as Wellington said of his Peninsular army, "You could go anywhere and do anything." If so, then you will not yet have the Saturday evening gripes in their full strength; but sooner or later I suppose you will come to taste the universal cup. Reading all that over, I become aware of the fact that from the sentence ending with "Cumbrae" all is parenthetical. What I intended to say was that from thinking about you I suddenly passed into the resolution of writing to you. And I write you to ask if you expect to be at home for some weeks to come; for, if you are in the mind to stick by your own fireside for a few weeks, I may possibly for a few days sit down at the other. In plain terms, I may possibly pay you a visit, if my soul and body continue to hang together by any tenure trustworthy to a reasonable man. You will not repeat my own descriptions of myself in the meantime, for they might be damaging ultimately, in case time and improvement should supersede them, and the business of *circulating* be resumed. But in the meantime I am rather a poor wretch, the good weather has been long in coming (and you know "the time grass is a-growin' an auld horse may dee"), and even now when it *is* come, I am not

the *ticket* I expected to be at this day of the year. I am easily knocked up, easily catch cold, easily get out of breath, can scarcely climb a sharp ascent at all without many pausings, pantings, puffings, and examinations of the landscape. Finally, I find it difficult to sleep with a bedfellow, being prone to get dreadfully hot, and to be "filled with tossings to and fro until the breaking of the day:" Whereof the *morial* is this, that I hope you are lord and master of two beds. I hope to hear from you soon at the manse here, where I shall have been located a fortnight on Wednesday first, and where probably I may spend another fortnight. When I have got the letter I speak of I shall be more in a position to fix a day for coming. Hoping you are getting on well, and that I shall see you soon to gratulate you with the "living voice," I am, &c.

To —— ——.

AUCHTERARDER, *July 6th, 1867.*

. . . . Perhaps you will remember that to-morrow is the 7th day of July. I happened to be born that day a few years ago—how few it doesn't very much matter, and I needn't bother myself mentioning. I cannot help remarking, however, that they are getting less and less few every time the 7th of July comes round—so much so that I am gradually coming to regard that day as the greatest nuisance of all the days in the year. Bah! I have a good mind to ask Gibson to preach a penitential sermon on it only I fear he is too far-gone already upon some other subject. . . .

To the Same.

AUCHTERARDER, *July 20th, 1867.*

. . . . Gibson and I had a trip to St. Fillan's about ten days ago, which I mention for the sake of an old fisher who

came down with us on the 'bus from the Earn to Crieff, and who interested me by his likeness to your daddy. He was plainly a good hand, for his basket was pretty full, though the day was unfavourable. Also he was a man of much humour and coolness. A man at Comrie found the 'bus quite full, and, being unable to get a seat, began rather unreasonably to abuse everybody who had one! till the old gentleman closed his mouth by telling him "they keepit an auld hearse ower there that he micht hire for tippence a mile." The blatant man retired. I noticed a hook in the old fellow's trousers just at the calf of the leg, and, thinking I was doing a good action, I took the liberty to say so. He sat upon me by saying "he wadna wonder," upon which I felt very flat indeed. The Earn must beat the Cayle sometimes, if it be true, which I don't doubt, that the old man had caught some 27lbs. a week before our meeting with him. . . .

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

AUCHTERARDER, *August 1st, 1867.*

For a fortnight I have been haunted by the idea that I should write to somebody or other: it was only yesterday, however, that it flashed across my mind you were the man. That looks, you will say, as if I very seldom thought about you: but if you say so you are quite wrong. I have thought about you daily in connection with some matter or another, but the idea of epistolation and the idea of yourself have never happened to encounter each other in my mind until the day referred to already—to wit, yesterday. Again, you will say (and you will be wrong again) I might have written you yesterday then. Sir, yesterday was the parochial fast!

Objections thus parried, let me proceed to business. You may now let "the other bed" for the whole season, without

apprehension of its tenant having his slumbers either broken or shared by an invader. About this journey to the west, like a wise man I have changed my mind: more particularly like the wise men of the East, I have resolved to "return into my own country another way."

The truth is, I partly fear the travelling and I partly fear your weeping climate. To be sure we have had a general weeping lately, but the temperament of your Clyde-water is to a proverb melancholic and lachrymose. Now, at the present time, I covet the Zahara:—Oh for drought!

I am going to tell you a secret:—"tell no man." Seriously, I had my chest once more looked into the other night by a Glasgow doctor. He told me my left lung is "affected;" a fact of which I have been perfectly well aware for many weeks past, but which now looms to me slightly larger through the haze of this professional confirmation. Now, that fact is a little unpleasant: in the great majority of cases the unpleasantness gradually deepens until it terminates in the plain "necropolitan." However, the medical man says there is nothing wrong that may not be righted this present season: this may be true or not—most likely it isn't true. "The summer is ended," though "the harvest is *not* past," and my ragged old lung is not so much patched up as I anticipated. However, I have learned to take the matter in a tolerably quiet spirit, and to have "a heart for either fate." If I do recover I shall be very glad, for life is a pleasant thing in itself somehow; and if I don't recover I shall not be much disappointed. *Voila tout*, except, indeed, this other phrase which comes in appropriately, and will be nothing the worse for an airing, *nous verrons*. The coming winter, I suspect, will settle the matter (and possibly *me*). Now, you will understand that all this, except the hopeful possibilities it contains, is *entre nous*. (I wonder why I am betaking myself so much to my little stock of French. Per-

haps it is that I am a little serious, and trying to seem the other. Well.) To people that enquire for me you will say that I am "middling;" that I am not *quite* ready yet for re-entering the "lists." Of course your brother Adam can hold his tongue. I should have liked extremely to see you and him before going home, but I must exercise a little self-denial in the meantime. The mending of a bad lung is cheap at a good deal of self-denial.

I am afraid this letter will appear a little down-castical. I am *not* downcast; I am, indeed, much as usual. I really believe a condition of this kind should not very much affect a man's tone; or rather one's habitual tone should be such as a fact of that kind ought not much to affect. Meanwhile, *vive l'espoir.*

I leave for home to-morrow: write soon.

I ought to have said I am a great deal improved generally since I came here, and that I am going home merely for change.

On his return from Auchterarder, the monotony of his invalid life at home was somewhat relieved by the excitement incident to a visit which the Queen paid to Jedburgh.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *August 17th, 1867.*

. . . . Of course the engrossing subject of thought and talk among us is the Queen's visit. It is to be paid on Friday next week—Friday first now. Ah—h-h! if you only saw how we are brushing ourselves!

Rosie Purvis's house at the townfoot is, or rather was, as black as the proverbial wolf's mouth, and the oldest man does not remember when that house was white, or even modestly

hinted of brown. Yesterday, as I turned into the street, that house sent a momentary thrill of terror through my bosom. It was as white as the undrifted snow! People advise Rosie ironically to have the "*theekin*" whitewashed too; for the thatch is of the immemorial colour still, and, beetling over the dazzling white, it offers a very curious and even startling contrast, especially to the unexpecting beholder. Think of meeting in a quiet country town a negro in a long night shirt; he would be a faint image of Rosie Purvis's house. All the people who have broken windows looking into the street are getting them mended of course. All the people whose chimney-cans sit on their chimneys in the way that a man puts his hat on his head when he wants to look knowing or rakish, are having those impertinent-looking chimney-cans set straight. All the people who are building houses, and who would otherwise have been going on slowly and soberly, are having them run up like colonial shanties—they are building for dear life. All the people who feel themselves at all feeble on any point whatever are having themselves strengthened on that point. But the greatest effort of all is the triumphal arches, and of all the three triumphal arches the great grandfather himself is getting himself erected just close to Jack's door. Indeed, it darkens his shop a good deal. From day to day there is some new limb or feature added to this great triumphal arch, and the progress of it interests us all very much indeed. We all go and stare at it every fine day, and most of us whether the day be fine or no. I take my own stare in the forenoon about ten or eleven o'clock; the shopkeepers stare chronically. Then there are three grand stares every day by the work-people—at breakfast time, at dinner time, and after their tea. The grandfather of all stares will be to-night (Saturday), after they have got their beards shaved, but the damp forbids me to join in it. In short, we are all pleased but Wattie Lowrie.

He asks—"What the better wull she be o' gaun through a' that wud." He advises Jack to "pit a stop till't," because it darkens his shop! Jack, in his reply, takes up ground which I consider impregnable. "It's no every day, Wattie," he says, "that ane gets ane's shop darkened wi' a triumphal airch." To which Wattie has not yet replied, but he still holds out about the futility of "a' that wud," and, as he is very deaf, and the benefit to be derived from passing underneath a triumphal arch metaphysical and difficult to be expressed, I fear he will never be able to get over his difficulty. Like most deaf people, too, he gets deafest at the approach of conviction. However, since writing the above, I have heard of another case of discontent—a case of a somewhat different complexion. It seems that we are all pleased except Wattie Lowrie and Archie Knox. This malcontent is engaged in the dissemination of pounds of tea; he lives by hawking tea about the country, principally among the hinds' wives. He has followed this occupation for a long time; he makes his rounds periodically; he rides on a small pony; like the minstrel boy and the wild harp Archie rides

"With his tea-bags slung behind him;"

and he is a very decent man—what people call a "serious man" indeed. Like Wattie Lowrie, he also is impressed with an overwhelming sense of the utter futility of *wud*, but he does not stop there; his theory of futilities includes everything of a material kind, everything visible to what the ministers call the "eye of sense." "Man," he says, "wad they gang into their closets and pray for her!" It is easy to answer they may do the one—the triumphal arches to wit—without neglecting the other. Archie believes but little in the conjunction of prayer and "work" of this kind. Still, I think he is wrong. At any rate, I hope to see her

"Majingsty" pass beneath "a' that wud," and the old provost go on his marrowbones to present *our* address, and all the town councillors, and the ministers of the Gospel, and the "madges and judgistrates" standing behind him with their bald heads bare and the whites of their eyes where the black and the blue should be. Wont it be great fun? "It" is all to be "done" just in front of Storey's shop; and, if he doesn't put up a balcony outside as he threatens to do, at all events I expect to see "it" from one of his windows, which will be almost as good as the balcony. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *September 30th, 1867.*

[After telling about the orchard apples, he writes]:—You see I am still interested in "little things," a kind of conduct which you seem very much to approve. To tell the truth, I am interested in them because I must; so far as actual life goes, I have no choice between large and little. It is Hobson's choice with me. But I can "go in" sometimes for large interests too, in a theoretical way; it is but opening a book and you find yourself in as wide a country as you like. And so I alternate between these two—the little of real life and the large of books—and I am mighty well content so far as interest goes. You know that it does not do for a man with a "towering intellect" to be always and exclusively conversant with that which is small: for did I not re-read the other day in the *Citizen of the World* of a certain Prince Bon-bennen-bon-bobbin-bon-bobbinet (isn't it the prettiest of princely little names?) who was so much taken up with a little white mouse with red eyes that he neglected all his proper duties, and his wife, the incomparable Nanhoe, had at length to turn into a great blue cat in order to gobble up the little enslaver! Moral—Go in occasionally

for politics and the infinite and other such vastitudes, lest your wife (or your husband if you be a woman) be under the necessity of turning into a blue cat!

To the Same.

BANKEND, *5th October, 1867.*

. . . . We had scarcely seated ourselves "forenent the sun," for the morning was warm and fine, when Thomas White joined us—so we went all away and walked till dinner time. Next morning Dr. Douglas returned to Moffat, and White and myself saw him to the train. In the meantime Gibson had arriven. . . . Next morning they also departed. I accompanied them to the train, and, having seen them fairly swept off again toward the region of activities, I returned to my "shore of peace."

The old friends, to whose visit he thus refers, united in urging him to submit to another medical examination. They wished him to consult Dr. Begbie, in the hope that he might be able to suggest some means of mastering the disease, which was slowly sapping his strength. It was agreed that Mr. White should see the Dr. and arrange for a convenient day on which Davidson might go to Edinburgh; but a letter written on the day his friends left him craved delay:—"You must not appoint any day with Dr. Begbie just now. I have a cold and 'cannot march;' and, indeed, the weather as well as myself must mend before I can come." Three days later he wrote again, still pleading for delay. "My cold *is* improving, but it has not yet so far improved as to permit me to come to town

for some days. I hope, however, to appear early next week. I want to put off till that time at least, not only because I want to avoid catching more cold, but also because I want to give the Dr. an opportunity of seeing me in my average condition, and not in my present exceptionally seedy one. You must not believe, as from your note I infer you do believe, that I am such an ass as to wish to put off medical examination altogether. The truth is that the last time I was in town I arranged to come back during the present month for that very purpose. That was two months ago and more. I make this statement for the purpose of assuring you that I really mean to turn up. And I really mean to turn up next week early, if health and weather permit. You are such a suspicious old buffer! nevertheless thou art a good soul." He was able to go at the time indicated in this letter, and the examination took place. Dr. Begbie told him that his only hope of recovery, or even of prolonged life, lay in going to a warmer climate, and spoke of Mentone as the place which would best suit his case. His friends urged him to go, and one of them on parting handed to him, in a sealed envelope, which he asked him not to open till he reached home, the necessary money. Davidson was greatly touched, but he could not bring himself to accept of the generous gift. His singularly unselfish nature rebelled against availing himself of a kindness which he knew involved some measure of sacrifice to the giver. Besides, his own knowledge of his state, as

well as the tone in which Dr. Begbie had spoken, made him too well aware that ultimate recovery was not to be looked for in Mentone or anywhere else, and the hope of merely prolonging his life of weakness and inaction was not so attractive as to overcome his reluctance. To his friend he thus wrote :—

BANKEND, *November 9th, 1867.*

You certainly had a right to expect a communication from me before this time of day. The fact is I have lived in a chronic state of meditation ever since I was in town. I am not quite so subject to it as I was, but I still have occasional attacks.

Of course the subject of all this is that "Franco-Italian difficulty" (for I suppose Mentone is somewhere between the two). The weather has been so good that I have not felt very much pressed towards a conclusion either the one way or the other; but I suspect I begin to find myself settling down for a winter at home again. In fact, I might have written you to this effect a while ago, only I wished to escape any further admonition on the point. Don't lecture me.

It would take me a long time, and cost me much trouble, to explain to you what "our Brother ——" would call my "position." I will only say that I don't see how I can do this thing without being more selfish than I can well bring myself to be, even for dear life's sake.

Now, with regard to certain monies that you and I wot of, thou art an excellent good soul, and wilt undoubtedly go to heaven. Be thanked a thousand times over, and assured that I have the notes (for I did lift the envelope) in safe keeping against my next sight of thee.

And as for my mortal body, it is doing very well indeed.

Commend me to Miss ——, and also to Jim and all the rest of the fellows, and be a good boy.

Thus he settled down for another winter of invalid life at home.

To —— ——.

BANKEND *December 25th, 1867.*

This is Christmas morning. This letter will not be in time to greet you with its writer's good wishes, so I make them prayers, which, indeed, all really good wishes should be. . . .

You observe I don't speak of a merry Christmas, which, I believe, is the recognised formula; for I scarcely believe in that particular feeling as the proper adjunct of this day's associations. But it all comes of those gorging, guzzling, gormandizing English people's immemorial (not to say *immorial*) eating-customs. They must needs dine upon every occasion—the opening of the Fat Cattle Show, the Founding of the New Hospital, the ordination of the "Youthful Pastor"—the very Birth of Christ! And though I am not sorry but pleased that the observance of Christmas is gradually displacing that of New Year's Day in Scotland (Christmas has great associations, but New Year's Day, apart from its whiskied traditions, is a stark-naked date), I cannot help feeling sorry that the most memorable of anniversaries is already half-hidden amidst the smoke and steam of roast-beef and plum-pudding and prize geese. At the same time, I don't pretend at all to thank heaven "I am not as other men are," the truth being that I wish the conventional wish of a "Merry Christmas" to companions when I meet them, and that I eat the roast-beef, the plum-pudding, and

the prize goose whenever they come before me, just as other people do—

> "Why should a man desire in any way
> To vary from the kindly race of men?"

Besides, I suppose the devout persons really exercise devotion in spite of the feeding, and the mere Christmas feeder gets at least a good dinner, which in itself is always a good thing. So we will even drop the subject, which, like everything else, has two sides. And, by the way, *that* consideration is the torment of my life; if everything had only *one* side, the conduct of life would be so much easier. And yet, on *the other side*, where would be the use or the pleasure of being clever and wise? Marry! perhaps it is as well that everything *has* two sides. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *January 1st, 1868.*

"Old Marley was dead to begin with—dead as a door nail."

You see I have some acquaintance after all with the works of your favourite, Charles Dickens. The "Marley" in question expired last night or this morning; or rather at the weird point of time that lies between night and morning, and belongs neither to the one nor the other. At any rate, he is dead and gone: henceforth he will never be present to us any more, except to our memories, which he will often visit and flit about and flutter over, with the troop of elder brother ghosts to which he now belongs.

I find it very difficult to assign a definite character to this "Old Marley," not so much because his nature was peculiar in itself, as because I really don't know whether it was peculiar or commonplace yet. He may have been a very

good creature after all, yet he was certainly of "vinegar aspect," and I don't know that I ever loved him, which, nevertheless, may have been from want of discernment. It is rash to write epitaphs before the breath be well out of the subject's body. And it is impossible to write the history of a given period before that period have well receded, and retired to a distance at which one pair of eyes can command its whole surface and bearings. And in the same way I suppose a man does a rash and shallow thing who says in three words on New Year's Day what the old year was worth to him, in teaching, in unteaching, in reaped harvests or sown seeds of happiness and goodness and wisdom. So I forbear, in the meantime, to put any mark whatever opposite Old Marley's name; perhaps Time himself, the father of all the Marleys, will do that with his own hand at his leisure.

Perhaps it would be still more rash and shallow to hazard any prophecies concerning him who has come to reign in Old Marley's stead. I am glad that your presentiments with regard to him are not unfavourable—that you anticipate a "not unhappy year." That manner of putting it is the very manner after mine own heart; it is hopeful, yet mild and moderate, and, for that reason, likeliest to be fulfilled.

I have had a visit of several days from St. Jim. He came last Thursday and departed on Tuesday night to Stow, where he was to help Robertson to eat a goose. I also was invited to the attack, but——. . . .

To THOMAS WHITE, ESQ.

BANKEND, *February 12th, 1868.*

Your threat of a visit delights me. In back-gammon phrase, "I invite a *strock*." I shall expect you by the first

train, and, if the day don't be savage, I will endeavour to meet you. I am quite as able for short excursions as when Dr. Douglas and yourself were here last autumn, and it is not impossible we may achieve the Capon Tree again. As Jim would tell you, I have been going in a little for the "Great Sulphur Cure;" in fact I have been going in for it a good deal of late. As to its direct effects I cannot speak even yet with much definiteness. I should say that *locally*—that is, with respect to the delinquent lung—I am not conscious of any effects at all; but generally the brimstone, or something else that I don't know of, has put me in the way of improving very much. Since I wrote to Jim I have changed my tactics, abjuring the chimney-corner, and going out every day—the *brimstone* has put so much *spunk* into me. (Don't use this pun for a while, as I have some thought of selling the patent of it to Dewar or Pairman.)

The reader will remember the excitement which was produced at this time among invalids and the friends of invalids by the publication of the pamphlets of Drs. Dewar and Pairman, in which the curative power of sulphur in cases of pulmonary disease was set forth.

At the beginning of the winter Davidson had begun to study German, and the study gave him pleasant occupation during the dreary months when he was unable to go out of doors. The earliest spring sunshine found him more cheerful and intellectually active than he had been the year before. The gift of song which had lain dormant for several years was reawakened.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *February 14th, 1868.*

. . . . I was preparing a valentine for you. . . . Now, it is a poor valentine (though, of course, you think it a stroke of heaven-born genius); but the fact is I never made a sonnet before, and I couldn't help feeling like David in the unproved coat of mail. A little round stone (very little but not very round) out of the brook is more in my way; that is to say a little lyrical company of hobbling stanzas serving for the effigy of a song. So much for the sonnet, which, however, has at least the merit of having been written for you.

LOVE SONNET.

(BEGUN FOR THE NEW YEAR—FINISHED ON ST. VALENTINE'S EVE.)

THERE is no date in Love's eternal Year
Saving its first,—O Loved deeply and long!
Nor shadow invades the sunshine clear and strong
Which dominates for ever its azure sphere.
Yellow the woods grow—yellow and winter-drear;
Storms trample down the infinite leafy throng,
Even as my fortunes. Yet the spirit of song
Lives in me, and the warmth of hopeful cheer.
There is no Winter in this Love of ours!
Thinking whereon, when with least clemency,
This Winter of the World and Fortune lowers,
Straightway that Summer's-Noon breaks in on me,
Which has no ending nor decline; whose flowers
Are of the Soul, and share her immortality.

"When the first snowdrop appeared," he wrote at a later date, with reference to this period, "I rose up

and made a sonnet to it, to the effect that I was very glad to be still above ground along with it."

A SICK MAN TO THE EARLIEST SNOWDROP.

FROM off the chill and misty lower verge
Of Autumn, when the flowers were all gone past,
Looks, that were prayers, o'er Winter I did cast
To see beyond thy fancied form emerge:
Thy advent was my dream, while storms did surge,
And if Hope walked with me 'tween blast and blast,
With phantom Snowdrops her pale brows were graced.
And now thy presence and my heart's fulness urge
This word of hail to thee, Emblem of meekness,—
Yet in thy meekness brave and militant,
Leading flower-armies from the bloomy South,
Hard on the heels of Frost and Cold and Bleakness!
O when I spied thee in this yearly haunt
"Life! Life! I shall not die!" brake from my mouth.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *March 7th, 1868.*

. . . . You have no idea how old I feel now when I go out for a walk with ——. His tendency to gymnastics makes him insist on leaping all the five barred gates and high palings we pass on our way. I try always to arrange my walks with him on the principle of securing a hedgy road, and not one abounding in rails and gates. But it is almost impossible always to exclude these latter elements entirely, and, therefore, I have to stand still every now and then to see him "go over," and ever as he goes over I feel a hundred years old.

Jim is a capital companion in that respect; he never jumps unless somebody else does and sets him on.

But Dr. Douglas in this item of companionableness is best of all. He and I used to hold in opposition to Geordie and White that it is highly ungentlemanly to walk fast; and I remember once how gravely he rebuked me for running a few paces to escape impending death from a Hansom in the Strand. He said it was vulgar, but I replied that I didn't regard a violent death as being necessarily genteel, and in fact that I considered it rather beneath my dignity to be sat upon by a coroner's jury. And these representations somewhat mollified him. . . .

To MR. ——.

BANKEND, *March 13th, 1868.*

. . . . Is it true that the minister is hen-pecked? I had a letter some time ago from ——, and he makes that statement—does not merely insinuate the thing, but speaks it forth as plain as the ten commandments. Is it true, then? You are on the spot and can judge for yourself. I don't ask in any spirit of vulgar curiosity, but from a quite warrantable feeling of kindly interest in one with whom I have companied in eating and in drinking, in singing and in dancing, in labour occasionally, and in idleness oft. Is the poor dear man really hen-pecked? O Greek and mathematics! O dialectics and humanity! O sermons and lectures! O exegeses and exercises with additions! O Homer and Calvin! Virgil and Newton and Doctor Dick! "Bold Plutarch, Neptune, and Nicodemus!" Is *this* the thing to which you have all along been alluring us? *This* the altar for which you have been crowning us, and wreathing our sprouting horns? Ah me! Hen-pecked! Oh, I would give much that it were false, that it were a base

slander, in short, a big lie! It *is* a lie, and I won't believe it! Nay, and if it were even *true*, I won't believe it! And yet, if it *be* true, tell the minister that the thing may be mitigable in the case of a judicious man. A judicious man will take his pecking only on certain places, you know. The eye, for example, being a tender organ, should be zealously guarded from the dire and swift-descending beak. And the nose, too: the minister has a large nose, and no doubt it will often be in the way. Guard it well; a scratch there would look uncommonly ill. But I dare say a scratch on the ear would be worst of all, it would be so suggestive. In short, I think the minister will find it come handiest to take as much of his pecking as possible on the cheeks and especially about the jaws. The marks will pass as the results of little accidents due to unsuccessful shaving. "Pshaw! a mere razor mark." Poor minister! Dear old ——! But yet I hope it isn't true. —— was always of a romantical turn of mind.

You must not come to see me just now. We are on the point of leaving our small "Sparta" here for a few weeks in order to have it somewhat "adorned." In plain words, the house and other premises here are going to be enlarged and improved (of which they have stood in great need ever since they were built), and we are to be off to temporary quarters immediately. And as we scarcely expect to be comfortable ourselves for some weeks, we cannot hope to make a guest so. But the improvements are to be carried out with all possible speed: and *then* thou shalt come, and I will show thee all this beautiful countryside in "the time when lilies blow and clouds are highest up in air." I will lead thee up the Jed and down the Jed, to the Ale and the Oxnam and the Teviot. Also thou shalt have a fishing-rod and "lure from his haunt the monarch of the stream," whose fried body I will help thee to eat. For I am not near dead

yet. I have walked seven or eight miles to-day. Neither am I at all dull; indeed, the days go past me so swiftly that I sometimes think that it must be true of earlier life as it is of old age, that

> "Heaven gives our years of fading strength
> Indemnifying fleetness."

Not that you are to take *fading* in a very literal sense either. I believe I am stronger than I ever was last year. But I think I am too much wrecked ever to preach again, if I *do* live, which I am not without hopes of doing. However, I hope I have a heart for *either* fate. . . .

The temporary change of residence to which he refers in the foregoing letter, disquieted him not a little. He says in another letter: "The whole prospect is to me cheerless, unquiet, perturbatious, and ghastly in the extreme. I used to be inured to continual change, and even fond of it: I was in the habit of 'taking a train.' But *nous avons changé tout cela*, as the man in the play says. I am become like the merest oyster. I have taken root like a tree."

To MR. JAMES ELLIOT.

BANKEND, *March 26th, 1868.*

I have sent back the books (Lamb and the *Small House*) by to-day's train. I hope they will reach you safe to-day or to-morrow.

The *Life and Letters* is a delightful book, and I am your obligated servant for sending it. Be blessed. I don't like "Rosamond Gray," probably because I am too old and

tough for much relishing mere studies in tears. I suppose it was meant to excite pity and abhorrence, as well as sorrow; but, then, one can neither pity Clare, nor hate the villain to one's heart's content, they are so shadowy and indistinct. The characters in "John Woodvil" are much the same in this respect. They are all insubstantial and intangible: "the mune shines thro' their thin bodye." As a tragedy, it is not tragical enough; it is not "sad high and working, full of state and woe." There is also, I think, too little action, and even the action is indistinct. I almost missed noticing the old knight's death the first reading; indeed, I had an expectation that he would come in all alive and consolatory about the end. But there is fine reading in "John Woodvil," and I read the whole twice over, and a good deal of it more than twice, which is not a thing one commonly does with a book one only gets the loan of to read.

I am prepared to apologize for bothering you with the reading of "critical remarks" in a note; but one *must* gush a little. So be mollified. . . .

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *April 16th, 1868.*

. . . . Besides being Thursday, this is the Lords' day here—(observe accurately where the apostrophe is, I pray you)—and therefore a very high day. *The* Lords are the Lords of the Court of Session, who, as you know, take to itinerating twice a year, and look into the more outrageous actions of their fellow-subjects, with a view to seeing who ought to be imprisoned or banished, acquitted or "hanged by the neck until dead," and then "buried within the precincts of the jail." The principal case is a Hawick one—a case of yarn-stealing—which, indeed, has been an almost

regular trade in that industrious community time out of mind. A lot of the fellow-townsmen and sympathizers of the martyrs to acquisition (thieves, that is to say) are here: they are kenspeckle with great comforters and pipes, and a certain Havician aspect which cannot be described to any purpose in words, but which one learns to recognize infallibly after a course of observation. Mostly they are lean, leathern-looking, eager, meagre, bony, big-gummed, long-toothed, chartist-looking. . . .

About this time he had a visit, which he greatly enjoyed, from his old friend Mr. Robertson, now of Stow, who was much struck with the remarkable knowledge of German which had been acquired by Davidson through the winter's solitary study. "I lent him then," says Mr. Robertson, "some volumes of Henrich Heine, and he sent me in a week or two a very real and clear estimate of the German critic and poet." Unfortunately, the estimate has not been preserved.

To THOMAS WHITE, ESQ.

JEDBURGH, *May 6th, 1868.*

. . . . Next week is the meeting of the U. P. Synod,—an old carcase around which I expect to meet a great many young eagles known to me when I myself was an eagle and young. If I come I should, according to your invitation, take leave to hang up my hat in your lobby—always, of course, on the understanding that you have a spare peg there, and that my own old tile shall not inconveniently crowd the rest of the hats. If the latter circumstance should be likely to occur, say so in two words, and I will

arrange my visit for some other early date. Only, you know it is said to be a proof of skill in affairs when a man can manage to kill two dogs with one stone; consequently, there is no saying how much credit I might attain if I should contrive to kill a whole dozen. Of course the dogs in the metaphor are understood to be ministers of the gospel; there is no denying that. But, if it be counted a little wicked to call the worthy men dogs, I reply that I can't help the metaphor.

I cannot tell you as yet the exact day or train by which I may come. Therefore don't bother yourself with coming to the train, nor yet in any other way whatsoever. I am quite robust enough to look after myself just now.

The visit to Edinburgh which he thus planned was duly paid, and was a great joy to many of his old friends. There was always much eagerness on their part to know whether he had been writing anything. He never paraded his verses, but would quietly give a copy of anything new to some one with whom he was specially intimate. It soon passed from hand to hand among the whole circle. On the present occasion many appreciative hearers became acquainted with the spring sonnet already quoted, and also with the following exquisite lyric:—

THE COURSE OF FEIGNED LOVE NEVER DID RUN SMOOTH.

LOVE is a rose, a rose,
A dewy-dawning rose;
Earth, heaven, and the souls of men were made

But to minister where it grows,
Where it grows.

Love is a rose, a rose,
But a something thorny rose;
And the thorn pricks all the year; alas!
'Tis the flower that comes and goes,
Comes and goes.

Love is a rose, a rose,
'Tis only a faded rose;
The rose is dead, its leaves are shed,
And here be the winter snows,
Winter snows.

The appreciation of friends probably encouraged him to further effort. On his return to Jedburgh he set himself to the revision of some old verses, as well as to the production of some new ones.

To —— ——.

JEDBURGH, *June 12th, 1868.*

. . . . Yesterday and to-day I have been trying to repair an old set of verses which I know you have, called "Upon the Hills." They were always lean; I have much difficulty in making them any fatter. Indeed, I have several times resolved to mend them, but hitherto I have been deterred by the first survey taken of them, to that end, and have put them down as past mending. I used to think, about the time they were finished first of all, that they were not so very bad. It is curious what changes the

lapse of a little bit of time makes in one's ways of thinking, tastes, likings, and standards of good, bad, better, and best. I have been cherishing a very low opinion about these stanzas for some time, and I was almost afraid to look them in the face again. But I have conquered this aversion a little—I mean I have inflicted a slight defeat upon it. And now I have got the most of them altered, turned upside down, faces backward, backs faceward, et cetera; and I almost half-believe they are beginning to wear a dawning aspect of sense—not just to be called lucid, but certainly in the twilight between sanity and the other way. Indeed, if there were only a connecting group of lines discrediting the whole business, a kind of rear-guard protecting the main body, they might almost be let loose from any further control. I shall send you a copy in the course of rolling years, or weeks (but I don't know that weeks roll, do they?) if I don't stick. *If* I stick again they shall be burnt.*

To the Same.

JEDBURGH, *June 19th, 1868.*

If this weather persists in protracting itself, I shall have to stop writing letters altogether. Walking is rapidly getting out of the question. One feels as if he were a bad candle, or a pound of butter, or any other oleaginous article. It is no longer tropical to say the heat is tropical. I am growing fast to be a very selfish creature. And I cannot help my decadence, for of course the central stump round which congregate all such accessories, appendages, and accretions as one calls sympathies, self-denials, philanthropies, charities, and the like—that central stump is *self;* and I feel that all those matters have melted away, evapor-

* The verses in their revised form have been given—page 77.

ated, exhaled, or by some other process quite disappeared. I am burnt to that one central stump. The last thought, or passing whim rather (for it was so unsubstantial and evanescent that I would rather not call it a thought), the last thing of that sort which crossed me was the question, prompted, I believe, more by curiosity than fellow-feeling—If it go thus with me who am lean, what must be the case of those who are fat? This occurred to me as I passed beneath the shadow of a wayside tree, which interrupted for a moment the streaming heat that was wasting my poor skull: but I am pervious to such interests no more. Do not these feelings, taken in connection with the weather that has brought them on, go far to account for the fact that human nature tends so strongly to salvagedom within the tropics, and that the virtues for the most part have fixed their more permanent abiding places within the temperate zones? This hint may turn out valuable if you like to follow it up: and, therefore I make you free of it and all the discoveries to which it may lead you. I know you are fond of scientific inquiries. For myself, the weather is too hot, I don't care one straw for any kind of information whatsoever. Oh, Knowledge and Instruction! get yourselves behind me for a season. Oh, how these too solid bones do melt!

I have been tiding over a few of the hotter hours to-day with a Jethart "bookie" containing accounts of four *naturals*, now gathered to their fathers and mothers. It is the joint production of several people in the town, and is published by Smail, one of our booksellers. I think there are four authors, and that they just took a *natural* a-piece, at least so I am told, though I think the two in the middle look very much the same man's handy-work. As these two appeared tolerably good, and I myself remember the *naturals*, I thought of sending in the bookie

for your amusement, and perhaps for your father's, who, I think, has a kind of warm side to a *natural*, and is one of the tempered breezes which God has prepared for his shorn lambs. But the fourth and last is so stupid and vulgar and so utterly soap-and-candley, that I am now of a different mind. The first one I have not read yet, but it is the biography of "Willie Wilson, the Poet," of whom and of whose works nothing is known to me. Be it added as the last thing I have to say regarding this *hamelt* (how that word ought to be spelt I do not know) book, that it costs sixpence, and though you should take a fancy for it, it is still within my reach financially!

* * * * * * * * * * *

I have also another, but a rather short, *pome;** but it is the mullygrubbiest *pome* which you ever did see. Its germ was made in a fit of impatience with fate, in an atrabilious mood, which, not being permanent, but indeed so transient as not to give time for the manufacture of more than four lines, the thing was thrust into an old, dusty, seldom-opened drawer in the cabinet of memory, out of sight and out of mind. There it lay until last week, when I pulled him out one morning and finished him off for the sake of making up bulk. Perhaps it may be useful in the way of reminding a fellow of what a goose he may have been at certain times; and how white-liveredly he has sometimes caved in and given up all for lost at the access of a little attack of bile. It is addressed, mentally, to yourself, and it counsels you, in case I should get shovelled off the face of the earth, just to sweep your mind clean of all reminiscence of the defunct and shovelled, as you would your parlour of cobwebs. You will call it bad names and

* He adopted this word after his interview with the Rev. curiosity in Ireland described pp. 105-107.

abuse it; but perhaps, after all, you may like to see it. Only, it is a big lie:—

LOVE'S LAST SUIT.

Love, forget me when I'm gone.
When the tree is overthrown
Let its place be digged and sown
O'er with grass; when that is grown,
The very place shall be unknown.
So court I oblivion;
So, I charge thee by our love,
Love, forget me when I'm gone!
Love of him that lies in clay
  Only maketh life forlorn,
Clouding o'er the new-born day
  With regrets of yestermorn.
And what is love to him that's low,
  Or sunshine on his grave that floats?
Love nor sunshine reacheth now
  Deeper than the daisy roots.
So, when he that nigh me hovers—
Death, that spares not happy lovers—
Comes to claim his little due,
Love, as thou art good and true,
Proudly give the churl his own,
And forget me when I'm gone!

His "fits of impatience," his "atrabilious moods," in one of which he says this poem suggested itself, were certainly few. None of his friends ever chanced to find him in one of them. His lot in life was not what the world would call a happy lot; his career

was certainly not what the world would call successful; he had to bear through years a heavy cross of weakness, and often of pain—but he was easily comforted. A bright day, the sight of an early snowdrop, the song of a bird under the eaves at daybreak after a sleepless night, would pour a whole flood of comfort into his heart. The noble words which Mr. Carlyle has written of John Sterling might have been written of Davidson: "In clear and perfect fidelity to Truth wherever found, in childlike and soldierlike, pious and valiant loyalty to the Highest, and what of good and evil that might send him—he excelled among good men. The joys and the sorrows of his lot he took with true simplicity and acquiescence. Like a true son, not like a miserable, mutinous rebel, he comported himself in this Universe. Extremity of distress . . . . could not tempt him into impatience at any time. By no chance did you ever hear from him a whisper of those mean repinings, miserable arraignings and questionings of the Eternal Power, such as weak souls even well-disposed will sometimes give way to in the pressure of their despair; to the like of this he never yielded, or showed the least tendency to yield;—which, surely, was well on his part. . . . Not a rebel, but a son, I said; willing to suffer when Heaven said, Thou shalt;—and, withal, what is perhaps rarer in such a combination, willing to rejoice also, and right cheerily taking the good that was sent, whensoever or in whatever form it came." The reader who makes much of the mere words and

phrases of religion, and who thinks he has a right to expect these in the letters and journals of one who had chosen the calling of a religious teacher, will probably be disappointed in these pages. Those who had the privilege of admission to the inner sanctuary of Davidson's friendship know well that there never was a devouter spirit or a more reverent heart than his, but he had a constitutional aversion to revealing his deepest feelings. Even in his earthly relations, that which brought him his purest and his most abiding joy was kept secret from his dearest friends. To those who knew him best his very reticence was an evidence of the depth of his religious experience. It was abundantly revealed to all who had eyes to see, in the high-toned purity of his life, in his unselfishness, and in his devout submission to the will of God. "Not my will, but Thine be done"—that is the highest that we read of in the Highest Life.

To MR. JAMES ELLIOT.

BANKEND, *July 26th, 1868.*

. . . . Have you heard of the drought? There has been none like it for two-and-forty years. All the pastures are burnt up; they are no longer green, but of a whitey-brown colour. We have had to buy twelve dozen pairs of green spectacles for the kye and the sheep, to make them believe the withered grass is as green and good as ever. They look, eat, and wonder. Carts and carriages, gigs and lorries, no longer are to be seen upon the highways; their wheels are so shrunken and *geysened* (spelling conjectural) that the rings come off directly they begin to move. The traffic of

the countryside is carried on by means of litters and hand-barrows. We go about in palanquins. I have got the loan of a Sedan chair from the museum; but it comes confoundedly dear for bearers. In short, it is Chaos come again—it is the end of the world—and "the deil is gane ower Jock Wabster!" Come and look at us as soon as they have licensed you. . . .

To Mr. Robert P. Douglas.

Bankend, Jedburgh, *July 31st, 1868.*

If I had time I would apologize for not writing sooner; I have no time; therefore let it be accounted for on the ground of sheer wickedness, guilt, and depravity of heart.

I am writing to you in the greatest hurry I am capable of. An opportunity has opened up within the last twenty minutes of getting you here for a day or two, on terms that are absolutely remunerative, even in a mere worldly point of view. The Rev. Mr. Polson requires *supply* for the second Sabbath of August, that is to say, Sabbath-week. I have just mentioned to him your name as that of a not impossible substitute, provided you be not already "previously pre-engaged before," as was the Irishman's mistress. I said you were a young man of high respectability, of great natural talent, of very extensive attainments, and, in point of orthodoxy, scarcely even second to myself, which report gratified my reverend friend and pastor not a little. "The Church of the Future," he said, "will not lack pillars." If you come you will be made over to me as my own private and personal property, ward, and protegee—my very own preacher, in short; and I will do my very utmost to procure for you beaf-steak, chop, kail, porridge, tea, coffee, salt and pepper, gooseberries, puddings, eggs, beer, spirits, loaves, scones, and where to lay your head. As further induce-

ments to compliance with my invitation, look carefully over this table:—

Talent,*	£1	11	6
Pleasure of seeing me, ...	5	5	0
	6	16	6
From which subtract for train, ...	0	10	6
Net Profit, ...	£6	6	0

Further, let us regard ourselves as a firm, Douglas & Davidson, Drysalters; and again let me present you with a table:—

Net Profit as above, ...	£6	6	0
My pleasure at seeing you, ...	5	5	2
Gross Profits of Douglas & Davidson, drysalters,	£11	11	2

Now, by all that is mercenary, I conjure you to come, if it be possible. As for your reply, it must be not only *immediate,* but *instantaneous.* Mr. Polson departs on Tuesday morning, first train, and, as he wishes to go with an easy mind, or, at least, with a mind to which the fact is known, you will require to let me hear by Monday at latest.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *October 9th, 1868.*

. . . . Do you know what has happened to poor ——? He isn't dead, nor yet has he had a leg broken, so far as I am aware. But he is married! He was overtaken by fate on Monday last. On his marriage day he wrote me

* The name by which the fee paid to a probationer for his Sunday's work is commonly designated.—ED.

a letter dated "10 A.M."—whether he meant it for *Ante Meridiem* or *Ante Matrimoniam*, "before noon" or "before marriage" I cannot tell until I ask him. The letter is extremely fluttered and ejaculatory. But perhaps that may be the way with marriage-day letters. At any rate they are extremely rare productions; it is the first of its kind that I ever saw, and as it may not improbably be the last too, I mean to start a private museum with it. . . .

I took a smoke between daylight and darkness and wrote the following "magnificent *pome*." You will perhaps transcribe it in your best hand, and you will call it

TO CUPID, SLAYER OF FRIENDS.

"I have had playmates, I have had companions:
. . . . . .
All, all are gone."

CHARLES LAMB.

CUPID, I hate thee! I have had friends—
As kind they were as friends could be,
But thou hast pierced them thorough the heart;
Now cold or kind they are nothing to me;
So I hate thee, Cupid!

Oh we have sat and talked together
Through many a night, and into the day—
"Not without song" and happy folly;
Good company now no more are they,
Friend-killing Cupid!

Talked—and smoked tobacco together,
While our souls did mingle like its fumes;
Now thou hast put out their pipes for ever,
Solus I sit in the fragrant glooms,
And curse thee, Cupid!

Pitiless Cupid! I am lonely:
Why hast thou left me, Archer divine?
Come, fit a sharp shaft to thy bow,
And shoot it thorough this heart of mine—
Pray, good Cupid!

To THOMAS WHITE, ESQ.

BANKEND, *24th October, 1868.*

I scarcely dare assert that I have been *expecting* to hear from you; my conscience is really too active to let me go that length. I have heard about you from two sources since I heard from yourself. The first of the two fountains was Robert, who told me you had escaped the "awful avalanche,' and returned to business in safety, but without having met Excelsior and his flag. The second fountain was our brother ——! On his wedding morn he wrote me a little note—a very wedding-mornish little note, exceedingly fluttered and ejaculatory. Among the things which the poor little note did articulately gasp out was the fact that you were present to support and encourage its faltering writer. Did he die game, poor fellow? I have not yet written to condole with him; one is conscious of a kind of vague profanity in writing letters to a human being who lives beneath the glimpses of a honeymoon. I suppose, however, that our late brother's moon is now reaching its last quarter, and that he will soon be accessible to the "light of common day."

What makes me write to-day is the fact that I have half an intention—indeed, a whole intention—to come to town a day or two next week, before the winter finally shuts me up. I am still as well as when I saw you, although I have passed through a series of very heavy colds. I have been free of these, however, since the hot weather came to an end. If I come, I mean to come by the mid-day train on

Wednesday first. Will you be in town? and are you still lawyer enough to be able "to take in a friend?"

I understand the Edinburgh people are fasting at present, but that, perhaps, will not matter for you, as you are of an ecclesiastical breed that rather eschews fasting. At any rate, if you be in town will you kindly drop me a note and let me know? . . .

When he went to Edinburgh, he took with him the following poem—all but one verse, which was not written till January, 1870. The reader will remember the account of a walk up Rede Water from Otterburn to Carter Fell, in a letter dated 14th June, 1865. In the course of that walk Davidson, having drunk at a wayside fountain, sate down to rest, when a little maiden about twelve years old, coming to fill her pitcher at the stream, tripped past him. The "phantom of delight" dwelt in his mind till, three years after he had seen her, she reappeared in these stanzas:—

IN REDESDALE.

THAT lovely little Maiden's face,—
  And will it never let me be?
No point of time, nor nook of space
  Whence it may not look out on me,
  Still pleading,—"Twine me daintily
A little wreath of words in tune,
  To shade the eyes which look'd on thee
That early morn of early June,
    In Redesdale."

Sweet Maid, I'll sing of thee!—At morn—
At early morn of early June—
I took my way by Otterburne,
To reach the Carter Fell ere noon;
Over the Border I was boune;
And as I went, the dews outspread
All night beneath the summer moon,
Rose light and vanish'd overhead
In Redesdale.

Then brake the light of morning clear
O'er that old field of Border fray;
And rose to inward eye and ear
The armour-gleam, the battle-bray,
And all the Ballad-singers say
Of the stout deed that here was done
About the dawning of the day,
When Earl Percy was led away,
And a dead Douglas victory won
In Redesdale.

The Percy ta'en, the Douglas slain,
I watch'd them borne for Teviotdale,
Till I, too, in the proud, sad train
Bore bloodied sword and batter'd mail.
But suddenly the dream did fail:
Vanish'd the form of either Earl
With spear and pennon from the vale,
For there sate she, this winsome Girl
Of Redesdale.

She sate beside a tiny stream,
Which by the highway-side outwelled

From moorland into morning-gleam;
  One hand a half-filled pitcher held,
  The other caught, and would have quell'd
The little waves which chafed their strand;—
  O foolish waves, that still repelled
The daintiest little lily hand
    In Redesdale!

The light—alas, so transitory!—
  Of eyes to which all things are seen
To float in wonder and in glory
  (The heritage alone, I ween,
  Of spirits youthful and serene),
Shed a soft splendour through her face;
  Her gold locks crowned her like a Queen,—
The very flower and uttermost grace
    Of Redesdale!

Oh vision fresh and beautiful—
  Beautiful beyond dream of man,
And fresh as lilies dewy-cool
  That shine upon a morning lawn!
  Art thou the spirit of this dawn
Vestured in form of earthly maid?—
  Aurora from her heavens withdrawn,
To hide in mortal masquerade
    In Redesdale?

Such was my thought; and as I gazed,
  Her beauty passed into my brain
In lines that cannot be erased.
  I would not see her face again;
  Though fairer grown, that growth were vain,

There were defect if there were change;
The visionary lines remain,
Let me not find the living strange
In Redesdale.

But, lovely little country Maid,
Thy beauty haunts me day by day
Oft but to pain or to upbraid,
When I could wish thee far away;—
To hearts in grief or gone astray
Beauty's pure self discordant grows;—
Oh could I charm thee with this lay
To come or go, my Wilding Rose
Of Redesdale.

For never Dawn on me doth rise,
But thou 'neath her pavilion rare
Of fiery-shining draperies
Sit'st crownëd with thy golden hair;
Thy moorland streamlet, too, is there;
Beside thee droop the foxglove bells,
Ferns spring, and rushes stir in air;
And far around thee sweep the Fells
Of Redesdale.

To the REV. THOMAS DOBBIE.

BANKEND, *9th November, 1868.*

It is only that appearances are against me: I am not really negligent. The fact is, that before there was time to get your letter, I had to go to Edinburgh to buy my mother a wig, and also for some other small ends which needn't be mentioned. (If ever you need a wig employ

me as purchaser; there never was a more successful wig than the one I brought home. I suppose you have read the *Bride of Lammermoor*, and remember that Caleb Balderstone was of opinion that to have a good apology for the want of a thing, is better than to have the thing itself. Well, something analagous is my mother's opinion of that wig: she declares it suits her better than her own hair ever did!)

I did not get back from Edinburgh for some days, but when I returned I found your letter. It is a kind letter; and when I had read it, I silently blessed the writer. So that if any stray good has alighted unaccountably upon your head these last few days, you will be able to draw a conclusion. However, as it was only the fervent blessing of a not very righteous man, it may not have come to anything after all. . . . As for my health concerning which there are kind inquiries in your letter—"Story, God bless you! I have none to tell, sir." I am not very well, nor yet very ill. I believe I am stronger than I was last year at this time: certainly I am to a much greater extent free from that demoralisation and invalid feeling which is apt to arise from prolonged illness. I have come to recognize the presence of my ailments, and to take their presence in a philosophic spirit. There is a wonderful power of self-adjustment in human nature; and the fact is, that the known probability of my remainder of life being short no more makes me complain than the reflection that I am a post-Noachian, and cannot hope to live the nine hundred years which crowned "the white top of Methusalem."

I often wish that you had been a Jethart minister, or that I had been a Stranraer invalid; but the heavens have ordained you to be a Stranraer minister and me to be a Jethart invalid, and this also is a thing which must be acquiesced in. Nevertheless, I should like to hear from you now and then. Talk me no nonsense about "swindling"

in the matter of letters. Any letter that speaks of you is valuable to me; and as for my own they are only commonplaces oddly expressed,—two-headed hens and three-legged geese, but not in the least related to the phœnix nor to Jupiter's thunder-gripping eagle. I don't know how it is, but this evil spirit of oddity straightway enters into me when I sit down to write to a friend, and I suppose there is no help for it. Friend of mine, forgive the oddities, and believe me ever yours.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *December 4th, 1868.*

. . . . Goldy and his fellow-traveller* arrived this forenoon just in time to be too late for breakfast, but that was no great matter, as Goldy has given up eating now, and his companion, being a magazine in himself, didn't need to draw upon mine. They were conducted from the station by a boy of the name of Tam Veitch, in the midst of a perfect hurricane of wind and rain, which had almost wetted them to the skin. However, I got them stripped of their grey-paper blanket or great-coat, and found that they were quite safe after all. The Spartan Tam had shielded them as well as he could beneath the lap of his somewhat scanty jacket, saying, doubtless, as he cast his poor skirt over them, "Your necessity is greater than mine. . . ."

To the REV. THOMAS DOBBIE.

BANKEND, *9th December, 1868.*

. . . . Last night I had a notable visitor. He came in in the evening just when we were going to light the lamp. At first I could make out nothing but his eyes and a kind of amorphous outline. I thought it was Aiken Drum. It

* Goldsmith and *Macmillan's Magazine.*

was ——. He stayed all night, and I accompanied him to the train this afternoon, grieving that he couldn't stay any longer. He is very fat and happy. I suppose you are aware that the dog has wived. On his wedding-day he wrote me a letter; it was fluttered and ejaculatory to be sure, but quite articulate, and not without coherency of a kind. Thomas, could you have achieved a letter on your wedding-day? I consider it a feat—an exploit; and the doer of it not very far behind that Macpherson who was hanged for cow-lifting, and of whom it is sung that—

> "Sae rantinly sae wantonly,
> Sae dauntingly gaed he,
> He play'd a spring and danced it round
> Below the gallows-tree!"

He gives me to understand that he has got a very good wife, in fact one whose place in creation adjoins that of the heavenly host. If I were half as good I should imagine I was going to die: but heaven be praised, our friend was always imaginative, and it is quite possible his wife may possess a reassuring quantity of little vices after all. I remember, too, with much satisfaction that his honeymoon is not very long gone down yet, and it may be that these romantical sentiments are only the after-glow that lingers a little behind it. However, I suppose it is time to cease "talking lightly of the spirit that's gone;" you husbands have clannish instincts, and in this sort of talk I have, no doubt, very little of your sympathy. Only, the buffer assumed an air so lofty and condescending, he was so high and far aloof, and all because he was married, forsooth, that I couldn't help thinking of the remonstrance that one small boy addressed to another on the subject of his unreasonable and overweening pride:—"Man, ye're just that prood because yer grannie's deid; as if naebody's grannie

could dee but your ain!" Now —— talked as if nobody could commit matrimony but himself:—high ground surely.

I have no more to talk to you about to-night, so that you will have no more to read at present. Be good. I hope your wife, and your Jamie and your Willie, and also yourself are all well.

To THOMAS WHITE, ESQ.

BANKEND, *17th December, 1868.*

I have just been struck with the idea that it is about time I should write you a note. To tell you the truth, I have been struck with this idea already more than once or twice, only I have never quite succumbed to it till to-night.

I have nothing particular to tell you, except that the weather continues very satisfactory—rude and boisterous to be sure, but still of a mild tone. I have been out every day, I think, since I was in town, and I have had no more visitations in the form of cold. That one which I caught and brought home from your nasty, old, windy, stormy, blowy, flowy, snowy hill-of-storms of a city—*that* one, my dear Thomas, was a bad one—a rogue of a cold—a cold of the first and foremost magnitude. He caught me first by the nose, which he pulled without mercy—just as Saint Dunstan did the Devil's. He caught me secondly by the throat, which he almost barricadoed. He caught me thirdly by the lungs, from which he almost reft all power of inflation. Finally, he caught me by the stomach, which he rendered almost utterly indifferent to provender. I could look upon hens and never think of eggs; upon fat oxen and forget that there ever was in this world such a thing as a beefsteak. Knives, forks, spoons, plates, pots, pans, became strange to me—they lost all significance—ideas positively refused to associate themselves with them. In short, I gradually perceived that I had got a very bad cold.

Bad as it was, (observe how artistically I begin a new paragraph with my recovery!) bad as it was, I say, it could not abear the face of the "great sulphur cure;" but in the words of the immortal Longfellow, under repeated applications of sulphurous acid—

> "It lifted its tents like the Arabs,
> And as silently stole away."

Perhaps it is putting it too strongly to say *silently*, for if the truth must be spoken, it "stole away," not without a good deal of coughter. However, stolen away it has, and I am again as well as I have ever been since the beginning of the general dispensation. How are you?

I have had an angelically short visit of our recently-departed brother. But you will know this already from his own mouth. Commend me to Jack Cowan.

Thus 1868 wore to a close, and he entered the new year with no such improvement as to warrant the hope of ultimate recovery, but yet with more cheerful prospects than he had had since his illness began. It was characteristic of him that he was occupying himself with plans for the professional advancement of a friend. The service which he acknowledges at the beginning of the following letter, was done at his request in the interest of that friend :—

To the REV. JAMES BROWN.

BANKEND, *14th January, 1869.*

You are a good man, and I ought to have thanked you sooner for the trouble you have taken. . . . I cannot say either that I have any special excuse to plead. . . . But the fact is, that I am now lazier at this time of the year than

at any other. You see I am become a hibernating animal now; like certain other species of bears, I drowse all the winter. I live such a "level life" that even the writing of a letter is a thing not so much to be dated as to date from. It is as if a cabbage should say, "Go to: my blades shall be wings, and I will fly." Indeed, I can scarcely make it plain to you how lazy I am! If a man goes in for laziness with zeal and of set purpose, no active mind can form for itself any idea how infinitely lazy that man can become; there is absolutely no bound nor bourne to the "Sleepy Hollows," the fields of lotus, the prairies of poppy and asphodel, whose conquest he may achieve. And, behold, I am that man! I have adopted this policy out of a strong and vehement desire to grow fat. All my friends pray over me, "Would he were fatter!" and my own responsive Amen is exceedingly fervent. And yet the progress I make is comparatively mean. I consume a mountain of victuals, and yet I am myself consumed with a hunger and thirst after corpulency. O that I were fifteen stone! The very sight of a fat man—one whose outlines are all curves, and whose frame is unmarred by the straight lines and acute angles which are so pathetically abundant in mine—makes me to admire and sigh. Ah, me! shall I never be plump and round—never, never be to the o'erwearied winds a pillow as soft and yielding as themselves? Behold that mountainous farmer: his friends never prayed over *him*, "Would he were fatter!" *He* drinks no cream, nor cod-liver oil. He only prays, "May my oxen grow fatter!"—and, lo! his oxen and himself grow fat together. Don't you think that there is something unfair here? that this also is a mystery under the sun?

I have given up all visiting some months ago; I have even recorded a solemn vow against the quaffing of strange tea, until the month of March. My last raid was directed upon

Edinburgh in the month of October; and therein I reckoned without my *hoast*, for I returned with a cold of the first magnitude. It took me six weeks to live it down. Since then I have gone into winter-quarters. I have even forsaken the assembling of myself together in the kirk on Sundays. Indeed, going to the kirk here is always a crucial test of courage and robustness, for the strong and the brave have entered into a conspiracy against us of the weaker and more faint-hearted faction, and take three hours of it at once. . . .

From all this you will have little difficulty in concluding that I must have become a very disagreeable old curmudgeon, and that if there be one solitary lingering shadow of virtue about me, it must be that habit of only visiting my enemies, of which I told you some weeks ago. I am very grateful to know that, even in the face of the hint I then gave you as to my character now, you are bold and kind enough to renew your invitation. The heavens be praised that Friendship can still be heroic! I cannot tell you how much it would delight me to visit you again, and take "sweet counsel" with you. I will see what the winds of spring and summer may bring with them. . . .

The forsaking of "the assembling of himself together in the kirk" was a matter of necessity, not of choice. When he was able to go to church he notes the event with evident pleasure. But the state of his health was such that it was at all times difficult for him to sit through the long service, and in winter it was quite impossible. His sensitive nature shrank from the disturbance which his incessant cough caused to fellow-worshippers. He was accustomed

to spend the hours of public worship in solitary musings. It was his habit, as often as the weather and his strength permitted, to steal out after the church-goers had left, and, climbing a steep path behind the house, to ascend by the pleasant lanes down which he used to come on fine days from Ancrum to the Nest Academy, to the "yett" at Williescrook, where he had a commanding view of the most notable features of his much loved Border-landscape. He would carry with him his Bible, Keble's *Christian Year*, and the Prayer Book of the Church of England, and by the help of these, and of the sweet influences of "the green-leaved earth" around him, would, in the temple not made with hands, hold communion of spirit with the Holy Catholic Church.

To the REV. THOMAS DOBBIE.

BANKEND, *23rd January, 1869.*

Since I last wrote to you, what the almanac-sellers call the "ensuing year" has made its appearance; it has "ensued;" and, as it is still comparatively new, I hope it isn't too late to wish you a happy one. Have you eaten any big dinners over the change? If you have, I hope you digested them well, and were thankful they did you no harm. Two years ago I ate, in an evil hour, a bit of a goose in honour of young sixty-seven. They called it a goose, but it was one of Virgil's Harpies, I know; for I have not subdued it to this day. And therefore it is that my New-Year's dinner ever since has been only three split peas, and no man

knows—save him who has dined upon them, as you will, no doubt, do next year—how easy of digestion three split peas are. Have you preached Old and New-Year's sermons? . . . . Some old scribe talks of the English "taking their pleasure sadly," and I suppose it is quite possible to make a sad sermon, such as shall be not all unpleasant to hear. Indeed I kept a skeleton myself in my hot youth when it was my calling to preach; but then I used to flatter myself that he was a somewhat elegant skeleton. He did not merely "grin horrible;" he was almost genial; his melancholy was of the "dainty-sweet" order; the very droop of his scythe was a hinted sentiment; you would almost have said he had bowels. . . .

One thing I charge you, by all the sanctities of friendship, by every consideration of duty, by all that is gentle, amiable, and ingenuous, "lovely, and of good report," that you suffer not to pass from your mind's eye: and that one thing is your idea of having Robert settled at Kirkcudbright. Anywhere else will do, so it be pleasant and free from colliers. I should almost think of aspiring to the eldership of Robert's kirk. The beadleship I covet of all things in the world. What cares I should lavish upon his gown and bands and cassock! With what an air I should shut him into the pulpit on Sundays! We do correspond a little, but only at pretty long intervals. Robert puts off until he begins to be haunted by a fear that I must really be dead, and then he writes. I put off in my turn till I begin to be haunted in the same way, by a fear that he will be actually putting on mourning for me; and then I write, saying, "Robert, my dear, don't do it yet;" and that is almost the whole that we say. But it is an infinite comfort to my soul that I know Robert, and that Robert knows me. Whenever I happen, as I do occasionally, to infer from much cogitating upon my sins, what a poor miserable simulacrum of a man I must be,

and to be much ashamed and cast down in the presence of that disagreeable fact, I straightway begin to recover heart of grace when I reflect that I have lived with Robert, and am pretty well known to him, and, that in some respects of character and spirit he doesn't very much disapprove of me! I have not found a whiter soul than Robert's. He is surely but a *very* "little lower than the angels!" I am sometimes conscious of a reverent wonder that Providence doesn't make more Roberts. Perhaps they all die in infancy. But you're a divine, and know far more about these things than I do, so I will change the subject and tell you about those sermons of mine. I speak of them *apropos* of Robert, because I used to have some idea of making them over to him. He used to be so lean and slender that I thought an early ordination would be very likely to kill him off quite too soon for everybody's sake, except, perhaps, his own. And there was no expedient I thought so likely to keep him walking up and down the *vawcancies* as just simply the plan that succeeded so well with me, to wit, preaching *my* sermons! They would have served for buttons to his foil, and kept him from drawing blood, or "making an impression," as I think the phrase used to run. For, Thomas, between you and me, and the tip-top of this porcupine-quill, be it whispered, they are notable bad sermons! Oh, you have no idea how bad they are, how dull, how drowsy, how blunt, how stupid—possessing withal a certain scanty treasure of the merest mountebank's tinsel—or, to change the figure, illuminated here and there by the lamentablest flashes of glowing nonsense, as you may have seen a square yard of ditchwater illuminated by a farthing dip. Poor sermons! They no longer walk abroad in the light of Sabbath forenoons, nor afternoons, nor evenings; they take the air on Fast-days no more! No, they are shut up in bonds and "perdurable dark," from whence they shall effect no escape,

except it be to final "hideous ruin and combustion!" For I think Robert is now fat enough to be ordained; and as for you, O Thomas, they would for ever blast any little esteem or respect you may entertain for me or my "parts," they are so extremely and anomalously bad. Honestly, I am ashamed of those sermons. It would take much to induce me to look the best of them in the face now. Little bits and shreds of them occasionally float across the disc of memory even yet before I can recognise and stop them, and I assure you they make me quite angry. I cannot say that I am doing any literary work. I read books almost all the time I am indoors, and when I go out I can't meditate any in those dull days, except miscellaneously and interruptedly about anything and everything—about politics, about literature, about plants, about scenery, about my sins, about the Christian religion, about agriculture, about the future, about how I am to open my "oyster," about what it will be like to be dead and buried. I used to think a good deal about that last matter a year ago. We must all die, and we know that pretty well. But the feeling I used to have about it, and which I suppose most people have, was that over the hills and far away, and deep down in a certain "dowie howme," sate that Lean One, playing with his dart; and that by the time that I reached him I should be so wearied and jaded going up hill and down dale that I should take the *coup de grace* at his hands not ungratefully. But all of a sudden, or comparatively of a sudden, this idea changed itself into the feeling that he was risen up and coming over the hills swiftly to meet me, and that at the top of the very next ridge or so I should infallibly have my weasand slit and the life let out of me. To speak plainly, during all the earlier part of last winter, I fully expected to be gobbled up quite shortly. Now, this change of feeling (especially if it be a sudden change), about the last incident, is very apt to

have a paralysing effect upon some of one's faculties. At any rate, one feels but little inclination to initiate anything—in the writing way I mean. I therefore procured myself a grammar and dictionary, and sat down to learn the German language, and to see what should occur. I acquired the German language, and nothing occurred! I am alive, and can read Schiller and Goethe! When the first snowdrop appeared, I rose up and made a sonnet to it, to the effect that I was very glad to be still above ground along with it, and then I grew comparatively lyrical. I had made no verses for years, but now that the fountains of my little deep were broken up, I effunded five or six of the most exquisite *pomes* you ever read or heard of. They are all in my desk just now, but I will tell you the names of some of them:—"The Course of Feigned Love never did run Smooth;" "Love's Last Suit;" "In Redesdale;" "To Cupid, Slayer of Friends." Their very names are poems, aren't they? In fact, my private opinion is that their names are the best thing about them. . . .

To MR. SCOTT.

BANKEND, *28th January, 1869.*

I hasten to reply to the kind letter of inquiry you sent me the other day regarding my miserable, old, rickety carcase. Upon reflection it occurs to me that I have allowed several posts to leave before despatching an answer, but I hope you will be magnanimous enough to overlook that little matter. It's a nasty, impetuous, headlong, hurry-scurry kind of age we have dropped upon, and it is absolutely necessary that there should be a few select and deliberate souls left to keep it from going to *smithereens* altogether. I am bold enough to lay claim to the dignity and merit of being one of that select few, one of those

that will only walk amongst the multitude of those that run, one of the seven thousand that have not too rashly bent their knees to the Baal of the times. This course, I think, can be shown to have its *immediate* advantages too, although the greater number of these lie afar off, and require one to "reach one's hands through time to catch" them. For instance, if I had rushed from the reading right and straight to the answering of your letter, you would only have had a bulletin of my state of health up to the end of October; whereas by the simple expedient of just putting off a little, I am enabled to give you correct information up to this date, which we may call the end of January! From which you must learn, and also teach your youthful but rising family, *never to do that in a hurry to-day, which can be done deliberately to-morrow.* Coming to the point of your kind inquiries, then, you will be glad to know that I still enjoy very tolerable health. I still *hoast* with much zeal and fervour, but I am not at all weaker; indeed I am stronger than I was last year at this time. I don't expect ever to be *strong* again, but perhaps I may recover such a degree of comparative strength as to be fit for some purpose or another. And you know we must accept life on such terms as we are offered it at. I will, therefore, not repine nor howl over that which is broken beyond mending, but endeavour by heaven's grace to meet all with an "all conquering patience." In the meantime I walk about as usual up the Jed and down the Jed, northwards and southwards, eastwards and westwards, as inclination moves and the state of the roads may permit; and when I am within doors I make myself busy—mildly busy I mean—over a book. I have read almost the whole of Schiller, indeed I had finished almost all his plays by the time I got your letter; and I am now so hard up for German literature that unless you can lend me some, I

must even begin and read Schiller again. I am anxious to keep whatever grip of the language I have got in the meantime, and perhaps increased facilities for getting on may offer themselves by and bye. If you can let me have such a loan as I speak of, I shall be a much beholden man. But none of your scientific stuff, mark me; for I don't care a rap for information! I hate facts — what this Philistine, positivist, turnipy, electric-machine era calls "facts." Send books with ideas if you have any (such books), histories, or poems, or stories. You speak in your letter of Porter's book about Moab and Syria. It happens, curiously enough, that I read it, I think in the spring of '57. It seems to me to contain some facts of real importance to the controversy now carrying on about the trustworthiness and correctness of the Old Testament, at least so far as geography and statistics are concerned. I remember being struck by the light he throws upon the populousness of the land of Bashan, and especially by the statements he makes about the multitude of cities to be seen. It is extremely rash to rest very much upon *a priori* objections. Colenso and his whole school are too much given to this rash habit, I think.

I have no local news to give you from this quarter. Nobody is dead nor married that I can hear of, except —— —— who is the former. Of course we have had our share of the general election—a very disagreeable affair in some respects. It has served to throw a good deal of light upon human character in some instances.

To MR. ROBERT P. DOUGLAS.

BANKEND, *3rd February, 1869.*

. . . . Having despatched the books, I now write to tell

you what I have done. If you should ever happen to have the same couple of duties to do, take them in the same order. It is the logical, sensible, and natural order. First do a thing, then say you have done it. Even the domestic hen, I observe, first lays her egg, and then cackles about it. And I hold that the wise and humble man (the wise man is always humble) will not be above learning lessons even in such a dame-school as the hen keeps. Cluck, cluck, cluck!

Let us change the subject. Do you continue to love the Carse of Gowrie? I once dwelled, or rather sojourned in it for ten days, and I found it quiet, still, and free from alarms; not dull, but only full of repose and peace; so that whenever I recall the Carse I say to myself, "There I once rested for ten days." My particular haven was no other than Pitrodie, and the very innermost, land-lockedest cove thereof was the Manse-garden. The Sidlaws and the Tay shut out all the world except the Carse of Gowrie, and the tall beech-hedge of the manse-garden shut out even the Carse. There I walked to and fro and smoked the very peacefullest of pipes, lighting them with vesuvians when they went out. If it rained I retired to the Session-house and peacefully smoked my pipe there, lighting it with stolen spunks from the congregational match-box. The congregation was not unprosperous then, and one could steal a spunk and sleep sound after the theft. I suppose it would be a very hard-hearted action to do that now. It is exactly three years at this very time since these scenes served for my life to transact itself upon; I remember the date so well because St. Valentine's day occurred while I was there, and I accompanied my pipe on the eve of that great Festival with the composition of a Valentine, the first verse of which contained a grievous malediction (introduced entirely from exigencies of rhyme) upon Mrs. ——, an

excellent good woman, who only failed of perfection by an unlucky distaste for the weed. This first verse was so very good that I shall begin the next page by quoting it:—

> "My pipe annoys my Lady's nose,
> (Catarrhs confound that member),
> So I must to the outer air
> To blow the fragrant ember."

My own horizon is a good deal changed since then, as well as that of the Pitrodie congregation. Not that I care very much for the change merely, but alack, alack! *mi Roberte*—Robert of mine—the horizon has been grievously narrowed by the change. Nevertheless, I do believe I am a stronger man this February than I have been in any other February that has come and gone since then, which is so far well. Indeed I have been very well all winter.

Now I desire that you will write and let me know if you have got the books, and also what you are going to do next. Do you mean to remain at Newton for any length of time? or do you mean to "go forward" in April and enlist in the noble army of carpet-baggers? Says the poet—

> "I've ta'en the gold, I've been enrolled
> In many a noble squadron,
> In vain they search'd when off I march'd
> To go and clout the caudron."

Alas, Robert, I fear I am little better than a "caudron clouter;" stick thou to the "squadron." We all join in wishing you well. My mother has been laid up these six or eight days with cold and influenza, and we don't think her much better yet. I hope all your friends are well.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *February 19th, 1869.*

. . . . You ask me why I do not write more. I have to say that I can't. If I did, the results would be even poorer than they are. I can't write about anything unless I first fall a little in love with it; and, as regards the other complaint, that I don't publish, I have to reiterate what I have told you before, that I don't choose any more to knock at the doors of magazines and beseech the wiseacres who have to do with them to sit upon me. As for making a book, I have not stuff enough for that. Besides, it is a little raw, crude, youthful, and not much removed from being a little vulgar, to rush out into the streets with half-a-dozen stanzas flourished and waved between one's finger and thumb, and to shout, "O good people, look at me and what I have done! My name is Thomas, and I have made half-a-dozen stanzas! Look at us, O humans!" Which is all that needs to be said on this subject. . . .

To WILLIAM MACDONALD, ESQ.

BANKEND, *March 4th, 1869.*

I fear the pleasure of inflicting myself upon you must be put off for a little in the meantime. I was in Edinburgh about October some two or three days, and was by no means unkind or inattentive to myself, and yet I found in a day or two that even in this cautious and mild variation from the usual tenor of my way, I had reckoned without my *hoast.* (Excellent pun for all persons afflicted with cold, asthma, bronchitis, consumption, etc.) And then the weather about this time of the year is apt to be very *coughific*, and our present March seems to take a good deal after his ancestors in that way. April is a month for which I have always a

strong fancy; indeed, I went the length of inditing a *pome* in her honour the week before last—the only time I have been able to get up steam this winter in that way. *Lege*, for here it is, "which its name is"

APRIL.

Lilies and daisies enamel
The mead where I see Her stand
All in the midst of the morning,
Her face to the glorious East.
A breath has parted her lips;
She shades her eyes with her hand;
And on her white-rose arm
The sunbeams gather and rest.

Pale is her cheek, yet it answers
The light with a tremulous glow—
And there are tears in her eyes—
Her eyes of cloudy and clear.
They are the tears of Hope,
Too light from their fountains to flow;
Oh, April, I love thee the best
Of all the months of the year!

But if all the months were pretty maids, and if one might have one's choice of all the dozen, and if I were to fall in love prudently, I would wed with May. She is safer than my favourite, and, in fact, I fear it will be the month of May before I dare venture into town. I mean to be in then if possible. In the meantime, be thanked very sincerely, and assured that my confidence in Mrs. Macdonald's housekeeping and yours is quite unbounded.

Now, with respect to this idea of offering one's self to the

world's attention in the guise of poet, it is extremely serious, and as yet, I fear, the thing cannot be done. To make a clean breast of it, my "commerce with the Muse" has been so scanty that the whole ledger thereof would not be bigger than the *Belfast Town and County Almanac*, or any ordinary class-book. This consideration, I apprehend, renders the thing quite impossible. But not only is it impossible—there are serious obstacles in the way! There is the rather chilly probability of losing money in the business—or rather (considering that I have at present next to no money to lose) of getting into debt. Vernacularly speaking, this would be the "muckle black deil." And also there is the probability —perhaps even more chilly—of having it made matter of public discovery that one's poems arn't poetry. So that, upon the whole, I think if ever this thing be done, it will have to be done later, and perhaps had *best* never be done at all. The partiality of friends, you know, is quite proverbial. But we will discuss further upon this matter when we meet. I think you will have seen almost everything in the shape of verses which I have to show; I gather that from the Shepherd, whom I have neither seen nor heard of since October.

About this time he wrote what is perhaps his ablest poem. It was suggested by the incidental remark of one of those good-natured friends whom we all have, who mentioned as a bit of news likely to interest him, that a report of his death had gone abroad. The closing lines were first thought out on the earliest Sabbath of April—a very beautiful day—when he was at his favourite "Yett" at Williescrook, "where," he says to —— ——, April 16th, "I like to

rest my two arms upon the topmost rail, and my chin upon my two arms, and to look over Timpendean Moor, down upon Teviotdale, and across Teviotdale on to the Eildon Hills and Tweedside, and so looking (as I think I once told you before) 'to chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.' The fancies I chewed the cud of upon Sunday were of the pleasant kind. . . . At the time I thought it was all due to the weather, and to the whin blooms on Timpendean Moor, and to a bush of palms beneath which I had paused by the wayside to admire 1557 bees (as near as I could count them), who were transacting buzziness, and singing a most multitudinously-parted psalm."

ON A CERTAIN PREMATURE REPORT.

A FRIEND I met upon my way
Sauntering in the streets to-day,
With rais'd eyebrows gave me greeting;
More than mere unlook'd for meeting
Could create, was the surprise
Fluttering all about his eyes,
And—with hesitance—he said
He had heard that—I was dead!
Gone beyond life's tearful bound
Dead, and gone, and underground!
And I answered that, alas,
My foot was still above the grass;
Tho' of late she proved a Dun
Took my sharpest wit to shun,
Plague on that unlucky bill,

I was Nature's debtor still!
—So we shook hands and parted, after
A little gratulatory laughter.

As I passed with careless feet
Through the noises of the street,
Musing on this ghastly rumour
In a half-triumphant humour:
Glorying I could still despise
The Worm's familiarities;
Jesting, too, that I had done
Battle stout with that Lean One,
Spilt his drink 'tween cup and lip,
And escaped his fleshless grip;
Nay, part-persuaded I had brought
Victory from the perilous bout—
Victory not impalpable—
Plucking from his trophied skull,
For meed and sign of prosperous quarrel,
Part of his o'er-verdant laurel;—
O'er this mood of exultation
Shot the chill interrogation,—
But is there ground for gratulation?

Triumph for the moment fled,
What I'd loathed I coveted,
And was envious of the Dead
Who have worked their work, and reap
The unfathomable sleep.
Imperceptibly regret
That in life I lingered yet
Grew, by whimsical confusion,
Of half-thoughts, a half-illusion
That I truly had possessed

What I coveted—God's Rest!—
But when far within His Gate,
Been, in some dim plot of fate,
Downward drawn or backward driven
From the calm to mortals given
In the stilly clear of Heaven!

Then of more lost heavens I thought;
For I deemed that he who brought
These strange tidings to mine ear,
Well I deemed this Messenger
Loved, or liked, or bore at least
No unfriendly interest
In the soul he held deceased.
That heaven in the heart of friends
Which receives us when life ends;
Which, when Earth no longer bears us,
In a finer light enspheres us,
And a purer, milder air,
Than the merely living share,—
This, too, I had won and lost;
O'er its tranquil threshold crossed,
Then to the cold been reconsigned,
Dispossessed and disenshrined!

Thus flew open my mind's gate
To each whim that knock'd thereat,
Greed of Death with Love of Life
Waging quite fantastic strife;
Till weary of such coil, at last
From my mind the whole to cast—
"Bah!" quoth I, "what boots debating?
Scarce worth having, not worth hating,
Is this niggard stretch of light

Lying between us and Night.
"Pain and grief and loss and strife
Plucking at the throat of Life,
Baffle him that would be glad;
Yet 'twere sickly to be sad.
Wise were he, as stout of heart,
Who with Joy could meet and part,
Who could meet and part with Pain,
Yet within his soul maintain—
Asking never what Fortune meant—
A contemptuous Content!"—
Thus I strove the theme to round;
Dint of staff upon the ground,
Which with sounding thump I planted,
Gave the thought the weight it wanted.

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But remembered and reviewed
Where, within this choral wood,
Soft I walk and silently
In thy holy company,
O Nature, of the better man
Staunch ally and partisan;—
Summoned here again to mind,
How dull! how false! how triply blind,
This most smug deliverance
Upon Life, and Death, and Chance!

'Twill be twilight's advent soon;
The last hour of afternoon
Hangs all-golden in the sky;
No flower yet hath closed its eye;
And around and overhead
Every leafy ambuscade
Veils a singing company,

Rains a shower of minstrelsy.
All the unreserved and pure
Rapture of the splendid hour
From my heart too plucks consent;
Here I cannot deem Content
Life's full-flowered and perfect grace,—
Oh, Content is commonplace!
And I hold, as when a boy,
Life is ever the root of joy!
No celestial or Elysian
Glories taking the soul's vision,
Nor hymns chaunted inaudibly
From heavens hung in phantasy,
Make me, amid all this ocean
Of light, and form, and sound, and motion,
Covetous of yonder sky.
Let heaven hang for canopy
Over earth, my dear abode;
For I praise the Living God,
Who all joy doth send,
I, too, living, stand
In your living midst to-day,
O teeming blooms and songs of May!

To the REV. THOMAS DOBBIE.

BANKEND, *April 17th, 1869.*

This delay has been a thing beyond my own control. have been suffering eclipse—disastrous occultation—fo some weeks. In plain prose, I have had a bad cold. A cold in my case, now-a-days, is rather a heavy and seriou business, both because it is uncommonly disagreeable in bodily sense, being attended by troops and squadrons c such matters as catarrhs, shiverings, coughters, hoastages

hoarsenesses, quinsies, and also because it opens a floodgate to accesses of the most stark and blank stupidity that the human soul can be deluged with—*positive* stupidity, quite black and bottomless, "deeper than ever plummet sounded." I have been immersed in it for a calendar month or more; all its Acherontic billows have passed over me. Selah. Indeed, I have been as good—that is to say, as bad—as dead; I have been incapable of either "work, or device, or knowledge, or wisdom." I am better again now. The wind is changed to the point that Burns and I are partial to—

> "O' a' the airts the wind can blaw,
> I dearly lo'e the west,
> For it's there the"—

gulf stream moderates the air and tempers the wind for shorn lambs, and also for shorn sheep of all kinds. In short, behold me again orient, emergent, valescent, and "writing you a few lines to let you know that I am well, hoping that you are the same, thank God." I have even turned my attention to the smoking of a little tobacco; for whenever I begin to feel unwontedly well a certain faintly-sweet remembrance of pipes and cavendish comes over me, and I gradually yield to that soft urgency for a week or two. So the other day I ventured once more just a tentative twopence in half an ounce of bird's-eye and a pipe—a *long* pipe, which will at least help me to keep the weedy demon at arm's length. And behold I find that I love it right well.

* * * * * * * * * * *

April 21st.—This starry firmament which I have set up is meant to indicate an interval of several days, for just when I had written "right well," I was interrupted, and I have not been able to resume till to-day. To-day it has occurred to me that in three weeks or less you may be in Edinburgh at the

grand annual caucus of the preaching and ruling elders of the church; and as it is just possible I may be in town too at that time (though the heavens have denied me the dignity of eldership in either shape), it is also possible that we may meet. How pleasant it will be to look you in the face again! Of course I shall not be able to vote with you upon the Union Question, nor to listen to your speech upon the subject either, but it may perhaps be allowed us to transact a mild little orgie of bottled beer about the Café or some other hallowed retreat, and who knows but the beer may be almost as palatable as the speeches?

You will observe that I am given to profane speech a good deal. Don't argue that I am envious, or *spleeny*, or much filled with animosity towards the Kirk that didn't perceive what a good creature I was. I have long since forgiven all my enemies (except myself); I have buried the hatchet and washed off my war-paint, and covet no man's scalp-lock any more. To tell the truth, I *did* use to be a little ill-affected towards fate; but "years that bring the philosophic mind" have done something for me in that way—not much, perhaps, but even little is much, so excellent a thing is "philosophy." On fine Sunday forenoons I used to walk to a certain gate on the top of a wooded ridge, and there lay my two arms on the topmost rail, and my chin upon my arms, and look away over Teviotdale into Tweedside, and "chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy." And, among other matters, bitter and sweet, which passed through my mind at such times, I have sometimes said to myself—

> "How many thousands of the merest numskulls
> Are at this hour in pulpits!
> O, happy empty crown,
> Skulls that hold brains are sometimes unordained!"

This sort of rubbish doesn't much occur to me now-a-days

—a happy riddance, for I always did know it was an inspiration of that vagabond spirit, "Sabbathless Satan," who is, no doubt, apt enough to forgather with leaners upon picturesquely-situated *yetts* upon fine Sunday forenoons.

To show you how placable, how mild, how sweet-milk-tempered and altogether loving and charitable I am become, I will relate a little anecdote. Give ear! Once upon a time, in my hot youth, and that is long ago, I had occasion to be rejected by the Edinburgh Presbytery. Well, I have forgiven the whole Court; there isn't a living soul of them but I can think of him without the least inclination to swear. But what I was going to tell you is this. The Rev. —— —— —God bless him, the old Drumclogger!—asked me what kind of books I read? for he had a feeling—good soul that he is—that my views were a little dishevelled. I felt a little backward about confessing to certain Ballad-books and other kinds of the literature of levity, and I said that "it would be hard to tell!" Upon which —— advised me to read Boston's *Fourfold State.* Now some days after this I went down Leith Walk, and upon an old book stall at which I halted for a minute, what should catch my eye but a copy of Boston's *Fourfold State.* I grinned at him and denounced the Rev. —— —— in my mind, and was just going to pass on when I felt inspired by what I considered the most ingenious method of gratifying my spleen that could possibly occur to any mortal. "Buy thee," quoth I to the *Fourfold State;* "yes, thou shalt be bought with a vengeance! Thou shalt be so effectually bought that thou shalt be withdrawn from circulation. I will bury thee beneath all the old rubbish I possess, and there thou shalt slumber unread till 'cockle-shells be silver-bells'—thou old night-mare!" So I bought him for a shilling, and buried him with much care and deliberation at the bottom of a box of the most forsaken and desolate literature I possessed;

and after that had wonderful ease of mind for many years. Now, some time ago (it was before I caught my last dose of cold), I had occasion to turn this sepulchral box upside down, and there, in his quiet grave, I ushered in a resurrection morning upon Boston's *Fourfold State.* The whole story of my "superfluity of naughtiness" rushed upon my mind with such irresistibly ludicrous force that it put me in a roar of laughter; I plucked the old mummy out of his corner, and, just to convince myself that I felt quite amiably towards the Rev. —— ——,—that, in fact, I entertained a kind of laughing kindliness towards him, I said to myself, "I will read this book." And I *did* read it. Now, if I were writing a tract, I should feel that I had come to that point where the crisis ought to come on, and I should therefore state that I was greatly benefited by the *Fourfold State;* in fact, I should hint that I had been converted by the *Fourfold State.* But, O Thomas, great is truth; and behold the truth is, I think Boston's *Fourfold State* a very poor book; I mean poor as a theological book to recommend any latter-day student of divinity to read. In some other points of view the phenomenon is not devoid of a curious interest. There are indications here and there that the old shepherd of Ettrick must have been rather a kindly soul; and yet he can utter repeatedly, and without very much perceptible shuddering, the terrific imagination that "God will hold up the wicked in hell-fire with one hand, and torment them with the other." This is apt to bring a cold sweat over the reader of these times. It made me think of a revelation of hell in Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus,* where an "everburning chair" is shown to the Doctor, intended for "o'ertortured spirits" to rest themselves in and recover. But to do Mr. Boston justice, I suppose his idea was one of the theological commonplaces of his time. But I will not let him off for this one: "The righteous shall then (that is

in the world to come) rule over the wicked; and," he adds, "they shall rule them with a rod of iron." Now, if any human being can feel satisfaction at this prospect of his duties as a saint, he must be in a bad way. But I suppose the human heart five or six generations ago would be very much the same as it is now. Probably Boston was as free from enjoying that prospect of getting possession of a rod of iron as any of us; perhaps he merely had a dim and confused idea that it was the proper thing to be capable of rising towards attainment of such a state of feeling, while he was as far from it in reality, as he supposed the wicked themselves to be. But this is a digression, and in a direction where there is very little to be got. The *Fourfold State* is, I believe, already consigned to dark oblivion; it is dead and gone—dead as the proverbial door-nail, or my best sermon; and perhaps when I entombed it at the bottom of my rubbish-box, I was merely the typical sexton of Fate, performing an act of burial that had long been due. In the meantime, just to prove to myself that I am at peace with all men against whom I ever had any ground of quarrel, I have set the old anatomy upon a book-shelf in respectable company; and whenever I look at it I say to myself, "The Rev. —— —— is a nice man, and so are all his co-presbyters—all nice men; and, good heavens, what an amiable creature am I!" . . .

As regards my health physically, which you enquire after particularly, I believe I am *not* going back. I feel stronger this spring than I have done either of the last two. Indeed, I have begun to wish that I had something to do—something of an easy kind of course, not requiring one to hurry about the streets, nor to waste one's precious wind in much speaking. All I want in the meantime is to make a beginning cautiously, and see what I *can* do. My ideal of life at present is to be in such a position as to make a very

moderate income during the day, and to have long evenings all my own. It would be a great relief even to make one's own living by one's own labour. When a man arrives at thirty he ought to be at least a self-supporting institution; and I take it for a good sign in myself that I have begun of late to desiderate a revenue most *hugeously*.

Perhaps you may find time to let me know whether you mean to be at the Synod or not. It is very likely I may come to Edinburgh sometime in the course of that week, and I could leave a note for you at the Hall. I suppose Brown will be there too, so I may see you both. . . .

It is nearly post-time, and therefore I must hurry. If it hadn't been for that, I should have written out and sent you one of those *pomes* of which I spoke last time I wrote. In the meantime, however, you have had enough of me; this screed will take you a week to read.

To —— ——,

BANKEND, *May 1st, 1869.*

. . . . Speaking of tombs, there is a Mausoleum perched upon a hill overlooking Teviotdale, and right opposite to my favourite "yett." General Menteith Douglas of Stonebyers, who died recently, had it built for his body's accommodation, and now lies in it. Last Sunday, looking across the valley towards the Mausoleum, I made this speech for the tenant of it. Write it down in your usual half text, and add to the heap—

"AND THERE WILL I BE BURIED."

(SUGGESTED BY A MAUSOLEUM IN TEVIOTDALE.)

TELL me not the good and wise
Care not where their dust reposes—

That to him in death who lies
Rocky beds are even as roses.

I've been happy above ground;
I can ne'er be happy under
Out of gentle Teviot's sound—
Part us not, then, far asunder.

Lay me here where I may see
Teviot round his meadows flowing,
And around and over me
Winds and clouds for ever going.

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

BANKEND, *May 6th, 1869.*

. . . . I am glad somebody has told you I am keeping pretty well. I think I have never been so well since the beginning of the present dispensation as I am just now. Sometimes I go so far as to indulge in a little manual labour; I have even entered into the spirit of muck-spreading! Did you ever spread muck, William? Or do you know what muck-spreading is? It is *not* a metaphor for preaching bad sermons! Therefore, you needn't take a red face at all. Yesterday I was planting and sticking peas, and the day before I was raking and burning thorns. In short, if I could only go on improving at this rate for other fifty years, I should not despair of achieving a respectable old age. In the meantime I still cough; but I have learned now to put up with life on these terms; so I cough and "keep never minding." Speaking seriously, I begin to think I might perhaps be able to do some light work, and draw a revenue—especially the latter. . . .

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *May 7th, 1869.*

I send you some verses [which, however, he afterwards recalled and destroyed]. They are not good; in fact, I dread they are nambical-pambical, but they are not about death nor yet about burial, and *that* perhaps will be some recommendation. The first verse has been sticking in my scribbling book for a long time, and, pitying its solitary state, I gave it the others for company.

His visit to Edinburgh at the time of the annual meeting of the Synod extended from the 11th to the 29th May. It will be long remembered by many friends. The greater cheerfulness characteristic of more recent letters, and the improvement in general health of which these letters speak, were equally evident in his manner and appearance. We were all greatly cheered, and though it was manifest that he would never be able to preach again, we felt warranted to cherish the hope that he might be spared for many years, and might have strength to accomplish something to enrich the literature of his country. He was confessedly the chief centre of attraction at the Synod to those members of the reverend court who had the privilege of knowing him, and it is to be feared that—so strong was the fascination of his company—they were even more than usually neglectful of the business on the Roll of Causes.

On this occasion he brought to the faithful

correspondent, who was generally the first recipient of his poems, a new contribution to the too slender store of verses which he has left us :—

A COTTAGE IN THE AIR.

I WILL build my Sweetheart a bour
  Doun and within yon valley sae sweet;
Roses shall cluster around her door,
  And bending lilies shall kiss her feet.

Beside yon Burn this bour I will set,
  Where owre the wee stanes it ripples and dimples,
And mennens play i' the gowden net
  Woven out o' the sunshine and wimples.

I will learn the birk an' the aik
  To droop and spread their branches abune;
They will lend, for my Love's sake,
  Their bield in December, their shadow in June.

The live-lang day, while I am away,
  Birds in their branches wi' singin' shall cheer her;
And a' the round year I will toil for my Dear,
  That care may never never come near her.

He was the guest of Mr. Macdonald of the High School, who did his utmost to overcome Davidson's reluctance to publication, but was only able to effect a compromise, by obtaining leave to arrange for the insertion of some of the verses in the *Scotsman*. The conductor of that newspaper heartily accepted poems which

had been declined by editors of magazines the pages of which are opened month after month to far inferior productions. It is not often that our serials are conducted by editors like Thackeray, who have a quick eye to discover merit in the writings of nameless men. He accepted one of Davidson's College exercises; though it showed little more than a promise of the power which was revealed in after years. Other "able editors" politely declined "On the Cheviots" and the "Premature Report." The two earliest contributions to the *Scotsman* appeared with his name in full. This distressed him, and he insisted that the rest should be marked only with his initials. He thus writes:—

The full name was prefixed to these two *pomes* by a sort of mistake, they having been printed off before the proof was returned. I think the initials are better; they are not so glaring and obtrusive. No doubt T. D. may stand for "Tea Dust," as you object, or for "Te Deum," or "Delirium Tremens" inverted—(the latter must be something very bad indeed). It *may* stand for all these; it may even stand for "The Deil!" Still, I prefer it to the whole name, both for the reason already given and for the additional reason that there is a man in Jethart who publishes a weekly newspaper.

When returning the first proofs for the *Scotsman* to Mr. Macdonald, he says—"I enclose also along with these another short *pome*, intended to be in the lighter antique manner; he was born this week, and your

eyes are the first he has been submitted to. Will he do?—

TO AMANDA,

WHO HAS ACHIEVED HER FIRST WHITE HAIR.

"OUT pale traitor!" didst thou say;
Prithee, have good counsel, Lady:—
Let it grow till all be grey;
All the world is old already;
The world is old, the times wax late,
And youth, my dear, is out of date.

When this old and foolish Earth
Takes her annual fit of beauty,
Poets call it her new birth;—
Feigning is the Poet's duty,
But well I know,—too well, alas!—
'Tis but an ancient trick she has.

Out of Time and out of Space
Wingëd youth his flight has taken;
Nor may any lingering grace
Rest with thee, all else forsaken:
In Time is no anachronism,
And nature brooks nor breach nor schism.

Wherefore, watch thy locks grow hoar
Gaily and without regretting;
Each white hair but brings thee more
To proportion with thy setting,
And nearer to the garment's hem
Of silver-crowned Methusalem!

Soon after his return to Jedburgh he was much grieved by hearing of the resolution of his friend Mr. Elliot to accept of an appointment as Rector of the Public School of Burghersdorp in Cape Colony.

To WILLIAM MACDONALD, ESQ.

BANKEND, *July 3rd, 1869.*

Your news about the poor shepherd's mournful fate throws me sadly out of gearing. It went to my heart like a knife, although I cannot say that it was quite unexpected either; only I have found occasion to make it a rule never to believe the very worst until it occurs. How I am to get on without him is by no means apparent—he has been a resource and "a very present help" to me so long. . . . I must see his face again before he goes, and, in fact, if he were at any loss about the "lowest A," I could almost find it in my heart to go as usher! Perhaps it would help either to mend my broken bellows or to break them sufficiently and for good and all.

When we met at Edinburgh in May Davidson promised to visit me in the course of the summer. This promise was fulfilled early in August. He came to us when we were on holiday at Loch Ranza in Arran. It was his first visit to the island; he was comparatively well; the weather was glorious; and so he greatly enjoyed the fortnight he spent with us. Dr. William Robertson of Irvine, Professor Duff, and some other friends lay and clerical were staying at Loch Ranza. They were deeply interested in my guest, and intercourse with them added to his enjoyment.

He was unable to walk far, but we arranged that he should accompany us in our rambles among the hills, and hired for his use a black pony belonging to a neighbouring cottar. It was by no means handsome, but it was sure-footed, and well accustomed to the mountain paths. The ruggedness of these paths rendered speed impossible, and so he sat easily in his saddle and took part in the conversation—enjoying the bracing mountain air and the splendid scenery. To guard against the effects of fatigue on his slender store of strength, we were careful to provide a flask containing some strengthening cordial—sherry, or the "wine of the country"—which was administered to him occasionally. These "drams," as he called them, were an unfailing source of amusement, and in the letters written with reference to his visit, are referred to in terms that, but for the explanation I have given, might possibly be misunderstood. There was one longer expedition for which other means of transit than the black pony were needed. Of that expedition he speaks in the following letter:—

To —— ——.

LOCH RANZA, ARRAN, *13th August, 1869.*

. . . . I ought to have been elsewhere than at Loch Ranza by this time, however; I ought to have been, and indeed honestly meant to have been, at Millport with Henderson. But it is difficult to leave a place when one has got a little settled down and collected in it; and,

besides, Brown is difficult to depart from, both because he insists and because he is himself a great temptation to stay longer. But I have been gradually resolving, and now my resolution is very strong indeed that

"Here nae langer maun I stay."

I would have been off yesterday had it not been for an expedition to Corrie and Brodick and (by some of us) to Goatfell. We were in great force; it took a spring cart, a waggonette, and Sandy Macallister's *muck-cairt* to hold us all. I went in the waggonette, and returned in Sandy's machine. You have no idea what a Highlandman's *cairt* can do in the way of speedy motion; but the jingling of the chains, the jolting of the wheels, and the rapid oscillations, tremblings, bumpings, and convulsions of the whole *cairt*, especially in trotting down hill, cannot be adequately set forth on paper. Whenever I sit down to-day Sandy Macallister's muck-cairt, with all its convulsions, reproduces itself. Sandy Macallister's muck-cairt is partly incorporated with myself. It was great fun. . . .

To the REV. WILLIAM T. HENDERSON.

LOCH RANZA, *August 7th, 1869.*

. . . . I am staying here with your co-presbyter, Mr. Brown of Paisley, who is holidayizing in this nook—one of the finest nooks I have ever been in. Yesterday, from the top of a neighbouring hill, I had the pleasure of looking down upon your kingdom, and remembering you with a pleasant spirit. "Be kind to him," I said, "be kind to him, for is it not Friday afternoon? How he must be perspiring." . . .

After a short visit to Mr. Henderson at Millport,

he went to Mr. Macdonald who was spending his holiday at Rothesay. "I have a very pleasant time of it here with Macdonald," he writes, "we manage to get out to Port Bannatyne in a boat every day and try our hand at the fishing. We have had no success till yesterday evening, when we caught four whitings. Mrs. Macdonald is quite delighted with them, and they are to form part of the breakfast this morning." He sends a pen and ink sketch of the fishing.

To —— ——.

ROTHESAY, *August 29th, 1869.*

. . . . Do you know that I don't know what to say to you? I am filled with the desire to say something that may comfort you, and yet I feel that I am the very poorest of comforters in all the world. I well remember, though, that God is the fountain of all comfort, and I will pray Him to comfort you. He has not in His providence left you comfortless. He has sent your father a *painless* and *quiet* death, and that is always an unspeakable blessing. What a comfort and pleasure, too, it will be to you to look back upon the pleasant and loving intercourse with all of you which has formed the course of your father's life! And, best of all, you can never be sufficiently thankful that Heaven has afforded you the deepest possible conviction of your father's perfect welfare in the kingdom of light. There are a thousand mourners to-day who would give much to have such a hope as yours. . . .

He returned from his visits in the west in better health than he had enjoyed since the beginning of

his illness, and he began even to think of a longer journey.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *September 7th, 1869.*

You see I have reached the old and familiar date once more. White and Elliot accompanied me to the train, where Elliot and I took our farewell of each other, and so departed. He is going seriously to look about him for some kind of place or employment for me in these "fresh woods and pastures new." I told him I was quite serious in my profession of readiness to come out should Mr. Micawber's hypothesis ever fulfil itself, and "something turn up." The Shepherd said that the bare possibility of a reunion there was a point of light in his prospect; and I have no doubt it will "prod" him on in his research not a little. . . . I hope you are beginning to have some little taste of resignation. It does not come early, and it will not come all at once, but the hand of time, which is always the hand of God, will bring it by and bye. . . .

The latter half of September was occupied with a visit, in company of his mother and sister, to the neighbourhood of Berwick-on-Tweed. After his return Mr. White came to see him, and they took a little trip together.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *October 7th, 1869.*

. . . . I think I told you a week or two since of this visit of White's. We intended it to consist of a series of jaunts up and down the country-side to look at things that are

old, famous, and queer. But we contemplated its coming off in September at that time; and now that September is gone and October come all muffled up in mists and "haar," I think we shall be wise if we jaunt but little. Therefore, it is but little that we shall jaunt. . . . October 13, Tuesday morning.—I have just returned from seeing Thomas White off by the train. He and I have been jaunting a little after all. We went by train to Roxburgh on Saturday, and walked down the side of the Teviot to Kelso. It was a very beautiful and sunny day, and we made the most of it—sitting here and lounging there, and walking a short spell to bring our destination a little nearer. There are few places that catch so much peculiar beauty from the visit of autumn as Kelso does; there are so many woods and clumps of trees to be seen all round it. We stayed over the Sunday. Yesterday we visited Norham Castle, and returned home here in the evening. Our jaunt has been shone upon as regards weather; but now that I have seen my *compagnon de voyage* off, the day is thickening in and apparently has rainy intentions.

The fatigue involved in the pleasant trip thus described had probably been too much for his strength. A few days after his return he had a very serious attack of blood-spitting, which proved to be "the beginning of the end." In his letters to his weekly correspondent he, with characteristic consideration, makes no allusion to this illness for more than a month, and does not speak of it plainly till the following February, when its disastrous effects could be no longer hidden. A quaint and graphic description of it will be found in a letter to myself of

date November 27th, which is given below. Meanwhile he writes as if nothing special had occurred.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *October 23rd, 1869.*

. . . . For myself, I honestly believe I don't "girn" a very great deal. For one thing, I have so very poor a matter in the shape of a life to look back upon, that I don't observe any great want of symmetry in its want of the crown of success. I mean, in plain words, that I have deserved very little. When I did begin to wish that I were settled down, I am afraid my desire was not so much to settle down and be useful, as to settle down and be comfortable and happy. And so you will perceive that I can hardly have the conscience to "girn" very much. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *November 12th, 1869.*

. . . . By the way, I want you to send me a book. It is a book about nothing whatever—it is a book that never was written and never was read! It is, in fact, a note book. I can't see the thing I want here. I want it a smallish quarto. If it be ruled at all, let the lines be narrow—wide ones are a botheration. Let the boards be pliant, so that one could make a cylinder of the book when one liked. And, finally, let it not be dandy. I want it for the purpose of writing down and keeping hold of those *pomes* which have a habit of flying away whenever I write them out, so that there are some of them which at the present moment I have no copies of at all. So you see the book will be partly mine and partly yours—will, in short, be our book. . . .

To the REV. JAMES BROWN.

BANKEND, *November 27th, 1869.*

I hope you will not attribute my long silence to forgetfulness; that would be to accuse me of ingratitude, and, behold I am only lazy. Perhaps I might even plead want of leisure, for you have no idea how every small action I get myself to do must be environed far and wide with rest. It is a square yard of labour in a square mile of inaction; it is as Falstaff's bread to his sack. Now, all this long time I have never enjoyed any extensive tract of honest leisure after all: I have been going to and fro, and walking up and down, and also I have been what we of the sacerdotal faction call "laid aside."

But, seriously, the patience and the kindness which Mrs. Brown and yourself showed to a certain dull, taciturn, and ill-thriven poor-devil, render it very unlikely indeed that that poor-devil should ever forget you. Indeed, I took so much of a dumb interest in everything—in all the circumstances and doings attending my stay with you—that I think I shall remember them all for a very long time. The walks, the talks, the jokes, the smokes, Glen Catacol, the Fallen Rocks, Goat Fell, the picnics, the herrings, the drams, the butchers bidual and diurnal, the Highlandman's black pony, Sandie Macallister's cart. They form quite a constellation of shining points which it is very pleasant to shut one's eyes and look at. Sometimes I have thought of building up a great and magnificent song upon the subject, but somehow—very likely because my habits for some time previous to my stay with you had been quite abandoned to mere abstinence—anyhow, I never have been able to get past those delightful drams, as thus:—

> Now to drink let us offer a stanza.
> Great Bacchus doth dwell at Lochranza:

We had blood of the vine
In all manner of wine
Between Tagus and Rhine,
And whisky divine—
O, we drank like high Jove at Lochranza!

I stayed with Macdonald at Rothesay an unconscionable time waiting for Elliot. At last I gave him up, and came away home, but on the way I found the dog in Edinburgh getting his life insured, and quite placid in his mind! I next turned up in the town of Berwick-on-Tweed.

There is a dingy, muddy, sooty, ferruginous little place in that neighbourhood called Spittal, just redeemed from the exclusive use of the devil and his angels by luckily possessing a mile of very pleasant sea-beach. It is much affected as a watering-place by the people of this country-side; and my mother and sister went down for a fortnight, taking myself with them to guide them, philosophise for them, and befriend them, because I am of active, cheerful, and lively habits, and a great wag. Here I addicted myself much to the study of the weather by comparing daily the readings of two barometers. I became a great proficient in meteorology, and I know exactly how many drops there will be in the next shower of rain. Here, too, I read a great deal of Missionary literature; one could realise so well the descriptions of naked salvage life by just taking a walk along that sea-beach which redeems Spittal, as I said before. I read in my Record that Mr. Anderson, on his way to the chapel in the morning, meets Mungjungo on his way to the shrine of the great log Jungmungo, as naked as he was born. Then I look up and the whole rencontre transacts itself before my eyes; for here is that lusty agriculturist Mr. —— sauntering across to the German Ocean as naked as *he* was born, and exactly ten yards from the point of my mother's nose and my own. To relieve my

mother—my blushing mother—I turn and walk the other direction; but there are all the rising and risen Misses ——, only half as far off as I could throw a pebble, "linkin' at it i' their sarks." Of course all this is only illustrative to me of missionary life in salvage lands. *I* know that all flesh is grass; but I must be off to my barometers.

November 30.—I forget what more I was going to say about this delightful little Owhyhee when I was interrupted by nothing more dignified than my porridge. It is not an inspiring dish, porridge; don't betake yourself to it when you find your nose against a brick wall in the midst of *secondly*. I always find it to be a rather over-zealous partisan of the body against the spirit, and on this occasion it quite unhorsed me. However, at the present time I am very much in the body's interests myself, and don't very greatly grudge it any few partisans it can enlist. About six or seven weeks ago I had quite a thrilling and romantical visitation in the shape of bleeding at the lung. I don't know very well what brought it on: it may have been over-exertion in the way of walking or lifting weights; or it may have been the sudden swoop of severe weather which took place then; or it may have been a cold, for I had a cold,—we all had colds, and the whole household was in a state of "hoasts encountering hoasts," as the paraphrase has it. In short—

> "How it cam' let doctors tell—
> Ha! ha! the bleedin' o't!"

Come it did—first two slight attacks which I suppressed, and then another one which caught me at the fireside reading *Juventus Mundi* after breakfast, and which was of too *fountaineous* a nature to be suppressed. My mother thought I was going to die; for myself I had an avalanche of three hundred and seventy-six thoughts at once; my sister went for the doctor—having some thought that there might be

"succour in God and good leeching." In a minute or two the affair hushed itself up again for the time, and under persuasion of morphia its visits became more and more of the angelic kind—shorter and farther between—until in a week they happily ceased altogether. To-morrow it will be five weeks since I had the last of them. The morphia often made my eyes too heavy for reading, and to keep myself from moping during the demi-semi-lucid intervals, I endeavoured to extract some faint amusement out of the attempt to lampoon myself and my ricketty old lung. I send you the result, that you may see what I can do in the hobgoblin line. I fear there is too much horror and too little wit in it. As for my present condition, the net result of this bloody business was a burden of stark weakness, which was extremely oppressive and disagreeable. I am getting away from this now, and rapidly losing the feeling of what the Yankees call "demoralisation." I can whistle a little, especially "Deil stick the minister." I can step over a straw, too, if it don't be a bean one. And on sunny days I run races with a black snail who lives in my father's meadow. Indeed I am out every day that is at all fit to be entered in an average calendar. But the winds all blow through me, which produces strange effects. I am quite used now to the sound it makes, and for all the world it is like that of the wind in a Martinmas oak; people stare at me as I pass them, and think—quite the reverse of the man in the miracle—that they have seen a tree like a man walking! So, upon the whole, with care, cod-liver-oil, and a quiet life I expect to make reasonably steady progress towards a fair share of health again. The care and the cod-liver-oil I can answer for myself; and the quiet life too I have done what I can to secure. I have written to such of my friends as I suspect of harbouring the kind intention to visit me, and have begged them

to leave me alone for a while yet. Not at all on the principle of

"Leave Marmion here alone to die;"

but only that Marmion may have his leaky old chest cobbled up again a little, for the said Marmion intends to show a little more fight yet before it comes to "Charge Chester, charge!" with him.

And now I have sworn a solemn oath to end my letter at the foot of this page. If I thought it wouldn't bother your righteous soul to answer them, and if I didn't think that I have behaved too badly to be answered at all, I would fill the remainder of the paper with questions. How is my friend little Mary Agnes Brown? I wager nine sweeties she doesn't recollect anything about me. And yet I remember her so well that I have taken almost a whole hour to make this little valetudinarian song for her:—

O Winter Day be short, be short;
O Winter Night be long!
A short little day to eat and to play,
And a long night to sleep and be strong!
Quoth Mary Agnes Brown.

But, indeed, I hope that both Mary Agnes and all of you are too well to need valetudinarian songs. Amen.—I am curious to know if your Oriental trip is going to get itself transacted; I should be sorry to learn it isn't. And now, pray remember me with all manner of kind friendship to Mrs. Brown. . . .

And so I pray God bless you.

The Lampoon, or "Hobgoblinade," as he called it, which accompanied this letter, reveals a growing

power strangely out of proportion to his state of physical weakness. But it is chiefly interesting as showing his feeling towards "the last enemy," who was now approaching to meet him with rapidly-increasing strides. It is only the superficial reader who will see any impropriety or unbecoming levity on the part of a dying man in thus making mirth out of his mortal malady. All who have eyes to see into the heart and meaning of this strange poem, will recognise in it an evidence that the writer has already, by God's help, won the victory over death. To him who can thus laugh at the grim Adversary, his sting has been taken away. No death-bed experiences that were ever written could reveal more satisfactorily, to those who have learned to understand anything of the moral and spiritual characteristics of this man—the loyal, submissive, and fearless spirit to which he had attained through long discipline of affliction.

A DOGGEREL ALLEGORY OF HEMOPTYSIS.

PART I.

The Singer catcheth cold.

LAST night I left my door ajar,
To-day I much repent it;
For there stepped One into the floor
Unbidden and unwanted.

"I'm Death," said he. "I know," said I,
"I know already; bless you,
The merest babe could ne'er mistake
That wondrous want of tissue.

"For I have seen your effigy
On tombstones and on hearses,
And all about you told at length
In epitaphic verses."

At that he bowed (and as he bowed
I heard his back-bone creaking);
I bowed in turn, then waiting stood
To learn what he was seeking.

"I'm tired," he said, "I've trudged all day
Until I'm almost cripple,
And seeing your door ajar, I thought
I'd call and taste your tipple."

"H'm! you mistake," said I, "the inn's
A little up the water,—
They're decent folks, and you'll be served
By their own pretty daughter.—

"The prettiest"—"Pshaw! in fact, I'm dry;
Time's short, we mustn't waste it,
There's liquor in that cask of yours,
And by the Gods, I'll taste it!"

I yielded, bade him sit; he sate,
I gave him drink; he drank too.
At the first draught I shook to see
The depth the liquor sank to.

With one long shank he stirr'd the fire,
Then threw it o'er the other
And, "Now, we'll make a night," said he,
"My lanky friend and brother."

With that he poked me in the ribs,
And chuckled grim jocosely;
I thought the fun one-sided, and
I answered him morosely;—

That "drink and I could ne'er agree,"
(I own that I was fibbing);
"Oh, then," said he, "you'll draw and fill,
And I will do the bibbing!"

PART II.

The Singer reflecteth upon the disadvantages of spitting blood.

What bag occult received his drink
I know not, but the taper
Shone through his form and left a mere
Gridiron on the paper.

Perhaps it all went to his head—
A common destination—
Perhaps his fiercely burning thirst
Produced evaporation!

But sad and silent,—drear and sad
And silent was this revel,
With gloomy eye upon the wine
I watched its sinking level.

O dreariest bout I e'er sat out
Or e'er in fancy fashioned;
What devil-revel e'er could match
This orgie unimpassioned?

PART III.

The Singer is prescribed for by the Doctor, and taketh morphia.

But it fell about that night's mid-hour,
That midnight hour full dreary—
I was aware thorough the air,
Of a friendly whisper near me:

A voice that whisper'd, "Drug the wine;
There is no trust like trial,"
And of a hand that placed in mine
The poison-freighted phial.

So, when that placid Bacchanal
Again had drained the beaker,
I handed a replenished cup—
The poison in the liquor.

Death put the beaker to his head—
I groaned, "'Tis now or never!"
And heard thro' all his bones a kind
Of desiccated shiver.

He took the beaker from his lips,
And in the embers cast it,
Rose, clutched his scythe, and gasped at length,
"Great Styx! what have I tasted?"—

"Indeed, Sir Death" said I, grown bold,
"So low the wine was getting,
I thought I'd eke it out, you know,
Just to prolong the sitting!"

"Good friend," said he, "leave jokes to me
When Death is in the question;
I've known him give an ugly turn
To such untimely jesting.

PART IV.

The Singer is cured, and thankful.

"However, since your wine's as bad
As even your joke, I'll spare it;
Good-bye! I never crushed before
A cup of thinner claret."

And off he stalked. "Thank heaven!" said I,
"I'm still a living sinner!
To keep such topers from my tap
I'd almost have it thinner."

At any rate, I'll keep at hand
This most effectual bottle:
So, let us pray, Heaven send us health,
And make grim Death tee-total.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *26th November, 1869.*

. . . . As a kind of refuge or asylum from wearying to which I may betake myself, I have set about making a new *pome*. I am not going to tell you anything about it, because I am not able as yet to tell you very much. I have the general notion of it before my mind's eye, but it is still too vague for telling to another, even though that other be you. Generally, it will be a kind of story embodying or running alongside of a moral. It is to be in the *Don Juan* stanza,

because that stanza is reasonably free, and also reasonably easy; but the final couplet of each I mean to make a double rhyme. Finally, I have four stanzas of it done, which I may perhaps write out and send you with this to-morrow. You can gather nothing about the *pome* from them, excepting merely the style, and perhaps the pitch of it; but you will tell me whether or not you think them good verses, and if you like the looks of them. But you musn't ask me how I am getting on with it, for I am liable to frequent and protracted "sticks" and standings-still, so that I may not add a stanza sometimes for a whole month. The four I speak of were mostly finished a fortnight since. . . .

The *Pome*-Book arrived last night. It is my idea's very body—but prettier, brawer, and altogether, as Old Edie would say, "mair aristorkaticer-looking." . . .

I had a "dwam" about five or six weeks ago which has sent me down hill a little, but I think I have got pretty well stopped again this week. . . . Will you enquire at Jim, or somebody else who knows, on what terms Members of Council get books from the College Library? I am sometimes at a loss for certain books, and I might perhaps take advantage of that source now and then if you could send me the books out.

The poem referred to here was, alas! never finished —only three stanzas were added to the four which accompanied this letter. The unfinished fragment is no inapt symbol of the broken life—which, it would seem, the poem was intended to portray—for in the little that is told us of "My old friend Will" it is not difficult to recognise Davidson himself—

> "Of most grave countenance, yet of most keen skill
> To set a truth within a jest was he."

It is not a little touching—in view of the evident auto-biographic purpose—that the last we see of the hero is his resting by the wayside, when the sun has gone down, before his journey is quite done. The poem, like the Life, is full of rich promise :—

HIS LAST POEM.

LEFT UNFINISHED.

I.

THIS Rhyme I build on what my old friend Will,
As having happ'd himself, once told to me.
Of most grave countenance, yet of most keen skill
To set a truth within a jest was he.
Of a fine wisdom he had store, but still
So held in poise of whimsicality,
Few deemed him wise but me; it was his nature
Rather to stoop than overstretch his stature.

II.

Nor did he hate the Devil with all his heart,
But found some little wrinkles in his horn
So comic-taking that he could not part
From some small kindness to that king forlorn.
I will not name them, we have such an art
Of branding little flaws with blame and scorn
Beyond proportion; only, like his fellows,
This friend of mine had, too, his peccadilloes.

III.

This fairly wise and pretty virtuous man,
Will Brown, to visit his friend Smith went forth,

Who in a town, by the "vext oceän"
  And insulated far within the North,
Dwelt and had duties. Grim as eye could scan
  A troop of craggy isles on a wild Firth,
Frowned in the face of this poor town; behind it
Stretching far round and off, dim moors confined it.

IV.

Dreary;—yet sometimes the repentant Sun
  Would turn him on his threshold round at even,
Surprising sea and isle and moorland dun
  With bounty, that this town seemed built and paven
All regally; men's vexed hearts would be won
  To peace, and set a-musing upon heaven;
The very children, 'mid the noise and pother
Of their rude games, would stop and kiss each other.

V.

Twas on an evening when the heavens did make
  Rehearsal of such golden episode,
Will topped the last ascent, and on him brake
  Full, that transfigured landscape far and broad
Whose sudden splendours so his spirit did take
  With ecstasy, still in the place he stood
With foot half-lifted, resting half a tip-toe,
Joy in his eyes played—played on cheek and lip too.

VI.

But the year had reached the dim penultimate
  Of all his months, and twilight's too prompt hand

Deplenished soon of glory and bright state
And left to their old sadness sea and land;
The tension of Will's gaze, too, 'gan abate
With the abating brightness, then his stand
He left, and sitting down on a great boulder,
Unstrapped his knapsack from his aching shoulder.

VII.

Alack! alack! hadst thou, sweet friend of mine,
In spite of aching joints, but onward fared
And, spite of rallying flushes or decline
Of beauty in the landscape, thou hadst been spared
That memory of the lamp's illusive shine;
No tale had been to tell, nor to be heard,
Thy journey had been happy and unstoried—
'Tis too late, Will: Time's one lock shades his forehead!

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *3rd December, 1869.*

I fear for your letter to-morrow. I am told it is "On ding o' snaw," and the prospect being so very white is very black indeed. The weather is gone all wrong. The year has run out of winters, and is begun using old ones over again, such as the grey-haired seniors tell us about. "Time has run back and fetched the age of cold," as Milton would put it, and the consequence for me is that I have taken to skulking a good deal. You see I am anxious to prevent any return of *dwams*, and I think they have some kind of connection with the cold weather, for the one I told you about exactly *synchronised* with that sudden swoop of frosty days which we experienced about the middle of October. I therefore make a practice of sneaking out about noon, and

walking backwards and forwards in the lee of the northern wall of the orchard. I am glad you like the new *pome* as far as it goes, only your praises are so loud and emphatical that they a little stagger me. I don't think it is "grand," and when you say it is "grandly new," I begin to fear your style is growing spasmodic. . . .

Pray for good weather and spring.

To the Same.

BANKEND, *December 10th, 1869.*

That "December 10th" which I have written down for a date to this letter is the first little circumstance that much stirred my attention as a reminder of the year's age—its old age. Now that it *is* old, I am glad it is *so* old. I wish it would make haste to be done altogether. It is behaving really very ill with its little remnant of weather. Its days are not days, for there is no light in them. Neither are they nights, for one cannot sleep through them, but must be up and eating. I almost believe they are days that have escaped from Lapland, and are running southwards to get the ice and snow thawed out of them! How they steam! how they reek! how unbreathable is the air of them! But I must stop this abuse lest I diverge into slander; for it is possible to go too far, even in criticising the weather. Let us hope to-morrow will be a better day—not a mere gaoler like to-day.

In the meantime, when I have managed to reach the sunniest corner of the orchard walk I try to amuse and cheer myself by picturing what it will be like when spring is come round again. Then there will be blossom upon all the apple and pear trees; blackbirds and mavises will build their nests and sing songs; the ground will be covered with waving ryegrass and leafy clover (for it is sown with grass

this year), the sun will shine, and I will sit upon this big stone and rejoice and thank God that "the winter it is past, and the simmer come at last." So I say to myself, and then I give a look to the wintry sky, and a hitch to White's mauve mits, and march home again. Let patience have her perfect work!

During his long illness Davidson was specially happy in his family surroundings. We have seen at earlier stages of his history how tenderly he thought of home when he was far away from it. And now that he was withdrawn from the activities of life, it was an unspeakable comfort to him to be in the midst of a large circle of kind and sympathising friends. Those members of the family who were married were all settled near their father's house, and the invalid brother was an object of tender affection to every one of them. Their visits cheered him, and he took a lively interest in all their affairs. He says playfully: "I am well informed in babyology, I have such a following of nephews and nieces. I believe I must be at least a thirty-fold uncle; think of that. To be uncle to three must be as responsible a predicament as being father to one; think, therefore, of my having responsibility on my back equal to that of the father of a family of ten." He had peculiar pleasure in the society of his elder brother—ten years his senior—who was then engaged in business in Jedburgh. He was his guest during the time that Bankend was under repair, and after that he visited him daily as long as he was able. The relation between the strong health-

ful man of business occupied with the bustle of the market-place, and the pale student whose work was done, was very touching and very beautiful. Everything connected with "Jack" was matter of deepest interest to Davidson. It was of his eldest son that he wrote thus in February, 1868 :—

The day before yesterday young Tam (Tombie) did a very notable thing: he tottered five steps and then fell into the gratulative arms of his fond father. This exploit has been the event of the week. Speech on any other subject excepting that and the weather is not tolerated in either house. John, I do believe, regards his first-born as the inventor of the walking-art, and as entitled to have his rights protected by Letters Patent from the Queen. Of course I still hold in my own mind that "there have been brave men before Agamemnon," that I have been occasionally conscious of moving from place to place by means of the device of standing on my feet, and then moving them alternately past one another; in short, that Tombie is working on a patent which is as ancient as Adam and Eve, or the Gorilla, or the great progenitor of all the cocks and hens. I say that I am conscious of all that in my own mind; but I have not yet had the hardihood to own my secret opinion, or even to hint in that direction. In the meantime I understand that my "last new nephew," as you called him, is able to totter more steps every day, and that he weighs 24lbs. avoirdupois.

The little fellow whose earliest steps were thus spoken of, was destined to finish his short journey several months before Davidson entered into rest.

They now lie side by side, and the same drooping willow-tree sheds its leaves on both their graves :—

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *December 18th, 1869.*

. . . . We are living in the Valley of the Shadow—that is, it has been darker to us all this week than it is now habitually with me (did you ever give God thanks for the 23rd Psalm?), for we have at length lost our little Tombie, and the thought of him keeps toddling every now and then across my mind. He died on Monday forenoon, and he was buried yesterday. We all miss him sorely. He has been ill again for about six weeks past, but for three or four days before he died he seemed to be getting brisker again. Then, on Monday morning after breakfast, he took a slight fit of coughing, and his father lifted him out of bed on to his knee, when he lay looking up in his face and patting his cheek till he died. And that was the end of little Tombie.

Almost all the town and neighbourhood knew him or knew about him and his long sad fight for life, so there were a great many people at his funeral; it was quite a large one for a child. I had a strong liking for him, for I saw him often, and he was a nice little fellow; but, besides all that, there was always connected with his little life a kind of personal interest for me, for he happened just to enter life the very day I was leaving it behind me—he was born on the evening of December 21st, 1866, just about the hour that I came home with my little amount of work done. Oh, how little, how very little that work was!

I am grieved for my brother; the world has prospered with him, and he does deserve it. We look at each other in a dumb sort of way. I can say little to comfort him, and I

am too near Tombie to mourn, but I want you to send me the 1863 hymn. I never told you that I gave away my copy to a poor woman in Ireland. It was a break in that wretched journey to Ballymena. Poor mother! She was in great distress about her bairnie. (She and her husband were returning from the funeral, and he was evidently in bad health.) I heard her story, and spoke to them both for a while, and, in a moment of inspiration, as I was leaving them, I remembered the little hymn. I had some idea you would not reproach me for giving it thus away, and now you can once more be a "daughter of consolation." So send it out to me, and this time I shall not give it away, but will write it out myself, and keep your one.

To the Same.

BANKEND, *25th December, 1869.*

. . . . It is time to wish you a happy Christmas, for it is already past eleven o'clock of the day. So I wish you not only the happiness of this Christmas, but that all your Christmases to come yet may be much happier ones than this. I suppose that we shall have to depend for the happiness of the present one a good deal upon ourselves, and not very much upon our circumstances: a good deal upon what hopes we can get to bud out in our minds, and not very much upon present realities. You know we all draw mostly upon the future for our present delectations; it is the trick of all humanity, and we practice it all the year round. So let us try to make a little halo of the seasonable "merriness" around the head of this rather wan and lugubrious Christmas, by hoping that another year will bring better fortunes for us, and that as our to-day is but a dull and beclouded one, we shall have many "gay to-morrows" yet, and "rejoice according to the days wherein we have seen

evil." I believe that last quotation is Scripture, which reminds me that we sometimes profess to be religious people to some little extent—you and I; and that some little measure of happiness—perhaps not a little—may be won by the endeavour on our part to enter into the spirit of the time's associations, which, if we lose sight of, or thought of, these sick Christmases of ours would be unhappy indeed. But we need not be-preach each other. A happy Christmas, and many happier ones to follow it.

. . . . Talking of Bill and of presents, he has got a terrier for me, said to be a very fine specimen. It is of the Dandie Dinmont persuasion, and, as respects colour, dark and dun—dark-bodied and dun-legged. I have been considering the all-important question of name, and have almost made up my mind to call him "Jim," after the Shepherd, but I am still open to suggestions, if they be of a judicious kind. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *January 1st, 1870.*

. . . . And now it is a new morning, a new month, a new year, a new decade—it is 1870 at last. I wish you a happy new year. I am glad it is come; and I am glad its predecessor is gone and done with. Not that I ought to dislike the old year altogether either, for I have had a good deal of enjoyment out of his reign. But latterly he has turned rather against me, and I have not had very much to be thankful for at his hands in the end of his days. I look forward to the new comer with better expectations. His days are, at any rate, of the lengthening sort, and every one of them, I hope, will bring more and more sunshine than its predecessor, with more and more warmth and genial weather, longer walks, and pleasanter saunterings up and down. If only these small wants be attended to by our

young friend, it will soon be spring again, and all will be well.

One of the last acts of '69, with respect to myself, was the awakening in my left shoulder of a certain violent, hot, fierce, and temper-trying pain, which once assailed me in the same quarter about two years ago. It is better again now, heaven be thanked, but it was bad enough while it lasted. It began on the Saturday evening—last Saturday evening, that is—and left off being intolerable on the evening of Monday last; since which time it became first quite tolerable, then mild, and then unworthy of any further notice. At present it is only by a few digs in the shape of rare and occasional stounds that I am still kept in mind of the rogue's existence.

. . . . You have broken bargain a little in asking after the poem's growth: you must not ask about it, because I only take to it by fits and starts, and then leave it alone again for as long as you like. There are only other two stanzas come into being; so that its growth, you see, is quite sufficiently deliberate. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *January 8th, 1870.*

Let me begin this letter with a word of friendly remonstrance and expostulation. Do you, after all the witty, elegant, and wise letters that I have written you—do you take me to be so little master of "our English" as to call my *chest* my *shoulder*, and my *shoulder* my *chest*? Is thy servant an ass after all? Has he only been speaking good grammar all this time by some special inspiration or ventriloquism like Balaam's, and now is he reverting to his real and vernacular bray? No, no, the pain was in the shoulder, and not at all in the chest. Moreover, it is gone away

again, and its place knows it no more. So, do not go digging into the earth, nor flying into the air, nor diving into the seas, in search of matter for alarm; but take our ills as they are, or try to imagine them less rather than larger. To be sure, the pain in the shoulder was bad enough, and has mauled me not a little, but I am beginning to gain ground again, and to eat as voraciously as ever. . . . Still I don't manage to grow fat: for that *dwam* in the end of autumn has rendered me so subject to colds that I have to take great care if I wish to go out and come in again without catching a little one. Luckily, I have caught no big ones, however. . . .

I told you about the terrier I was to get, and which was to be named after the Shepherd. He arrived in the bottom of a basket, borne by two boys, last Monday forenoon, and his name being already "Dick" and not Jim, I have concluded to let him be Dick all the days of his life. Changing names is always an awkward affair, whether it be the case of your Joshua Bug, or the case of your terrier Dick. As regards the tyke himself, he is as nice a little hobgoblin as one could desire—a goblin of most fierce, wild, and dishevelled aspect; and we mean to be very great friends, indeed. He is between three and four months old. . . .

In what rash and inconsiderate hour did I hint at that *pome?* Positively, you must not jog me; if you jog me I shall stand still, of malice and set purpose! Indeed, I have some thought of laying it aside for a while, at any rate until I see the end better. In the meantime, I send you these three verses under protest; I send them just because I am weak, and the temptation to please you is strong; I send them under protest because I shall probably alter them all again, as well as the verses you have got already. They are quite unfinished.

To the Same.

BANKEND, *January 14th, 1870.*

* * * * * * * * * * *

The Percy ta'en, the Douglas slain,
I watch'd them borne for Teviotdale,
Till I, too, in the proud, sad train
Bore blooded sword and battered mail.
But suddenly the dream did fail:
Vanished the form of either Earl
With spear and pennon from the vale,
For there sate she, the winsome Girl
Of Redesdale.

There now! That is the shape of the "missing link" in Redesdale. Will it do? Say yes, for it will have to do. I have no more poems to give you this week; and as for your last letter in January, which you threaten to make a *jogger* of, I hereby set it at utter defiance, and the more you jog the more will I stand still! Moreover, I don't see my way at present, and have half-and-more laid that *pome* aside for a while. Hence I have gone back on "Redesdale," you see. Besides, you have not yet criticised those verses I gave you in my last letter; only I reflect you must have been greatly hurried to get your answer ready in time. So, never mind, but don't put me off by telling me that, as the first instalment was "grandly new," the second one is "newly grand." We are passing through a stratum of colds here just now. My father and mother have been laid up, and my mother is still in bed. I thought I had escaped, but I feel symptoms this afternoon that I am mistaken. I mean to take measures at once—*i. e.*, mustard and *growl.*

The repetition here of this stanza already given in

the poem of "Redesdale," will be pardoned in view of the fact that it was the last verse Davidson ever wrote. It is not a little touching to note that his latest poetical utterance is an echo of the Ballad literature which was the delight of his boyhood. He has been "allured and brought into the wilderness," but he is "singing again as in the days of his youth."

To the REV. JAMES BROWN.

BANKEND, *January 17th, 1870.*

Your letter was very welcome and very exhilarating; in fact, it diffused all about me something quite resembling daylight. For you must know we have had no days here this long time—nothing but nights of the deepest dye—"nights deep-drenched in misty Acheron." I sigh for Arran shore, for it's there I fain would be, drinking drams in the sun in that bonnie countrie! Oh, those drams!

And then your letter did so smack of the Orient that my head has been filled with the Turban ever since I read it. I would to the heavens I could have gone a-crusading along with you. . . .

I have enclosed, you will see, other three snatches of verse—one of them a sonnet *—which I don't think you have seen, but which I think you will like, a little. It doesn't mean to be thoughtful, of course; but I think it is rather poetical in the expression, and I have reason to know that the feeling it embodies is extremely real. But, behold, how this man praiseth himself! It would certainly be a great advantage to me in every way to get some of those things into a good magazine; only, I beseech you not to go far out of your way, nor yet bring your soul nigh to anything

* "A Sick Man to the Earliest Snowdrop."

that is disagreeable to accomplish this end. Moreover, don't be disappointed or annoyed on my account if you shouldn't happen to succeed. "He that is down need fear no fall." I remember some seven or eight years since, when I was living in Edinburgh, and happened to get inconveniently out-at-elbows, I sent to *Macmillan* that copy of verses which was printed in the *Scotsman* last summer, "On the Cheviots." It was in a very crude and dishevelled condition, however, barely finished, and not quite intelligible even to myself at that time; therefore they sent it back along with a circular as ingeniously contrived as any fair-minded recipient could desire to "let him down softly." So I put the poem into my desk again, and a good wisp of straw into each elbow, and got over the disappointment very soon. If, then, you should have to write No, remember that you write it to one who knows all about No already; and we have plenty of good straw here. . . .

Now you are the very kindest of men to take all this trouble, and you will undoubtedly go to heaven. But for all that, take care of the perils which beset those who go on pilgrimage. Beware of "Shrieks" and "Dragonmen," and all men of Belial of that sort. As for myself, I have no more tales of blood to tell you; but I make uncommonly little progress in the right direction. However, I will turn as strenuous a hand as I can to that old Ishmael whose hand is against us all, and try not to be dead when you come back. . . . I commend myself to those of your fellow-travellers whom I know, and I bid them and you God speed.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *January 21st, 1870.*

. . . . I am glad you liked so well that missing link in "Redesdale," now that it has been found. I finished yesterday the heavy task of writing them all into the

morocco book. It is about one-third filled with them; and glad am I that I have got the affair dragged to its end—transcribing is really so wearisome, both to the flesh and to the spirit. About the "grandly new" one; there is nothing to report whatever. I never take it up into my thoughts at all just now. As for that stumbling-block of a "But," I put it in for the sense's sake, for one thing; and also to keep people from swimming along the rhythm too easily and monotonously. Verse grows wearisome if it don't be varied, and the reader is made careful by being now and again taken aback. I stand up for the "but:" just make as good a job of the "year" as you can, and go on. In the meantime I am quite in earnest when I say, Don't jog me. Anything I do in this line at this season is by mere chance. To write steadily, or think often on poetical subjects, I must be in the habit of going out and coming in as I like among green fields, green woods, and good weather. This is the time of all the year when I don't "get on." I am not *en rapport* with nature: she gives me no pleasure: I have to skulk from her. Indeed, since I had that pain in the shoulder I have not been out of doors at all; and this last cold has not made me very much better. . . . These matters, I believe, have a good deal to do with my not getting on with the *pome*, too; for your praise is so pleasant to me that I think I could make shift to get over some of the other impediments to get more of it. They also kept me from going for that P. O. order; perhaps you can give Jim the money in the meantime, and he can get me some books just now when passing through. Massinger's *Plays*, Palgrave's *Travels in Arabia*, Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, I will name at present.

To the Same.

Thank Heaven! *February 4th, 1870.*

You see that I begin for once in a becomingly grateful

strain. I '*have* written the words gratefully, for I begin to have forewarnings and pleasant bodings of the coming of the Spring. To-day, for instance, looks like a forerunner; it is genial and clear, and some wafts of air that I have caught through open windows have quite a mild feeling about them. There will soon be snowdrops, I have no doubt, concerning which you know what has been said or sung by a certain sick man of our acquaintance. The same sick man would say to a very dear and faithful inquirer that he thinks "if Spring were come we *may* begin to hope again in a mild and humble sort of way." But the "consciousness" you say you have gathered from my letters, that I am not so well as I have been, is quite correct; indeed, I have somewhat carefully endeavoured to make their tone such as would, not abruptly and violently, but as gently as possible, lead up to this same consciousness. I fear I shall not be so strong this year as I was last. I have been losing ground a good deal this winter, especially since I have been shut up within doors. My arch-enemy, or at least the enemy who first succeeded in bringing me down again, was the attack which I have always talked about rather vaguely as "the Dwam." You were so "dowie, and heartless, and wae" at the time that I could not find it in my heart to tell you that the Dwam was neither more nor less than an attack of bleeding at the lungs! I think it was brought on by over-fatigue and cold. At first it was so trifling that I said nothing about it; then it came on again one morning while I sat reading at the fireside after breakfast, where it could be concealed no longer. So my mother sent for the doctor, who gave me some morphia, which gradually brought the attacks to a close. I did not lose much more, I am sure, than half-a-pint of blood altogether; the doctor said the loss was trifling, and that if I stayed indoors until my slight cold passed away, I might go on as usual. I thought very

little of the matter myself, too, excepting only the main attack; indeed, I amused myself between the doses of morphia with composing a lampoon on the whole business —an employment in which I was interrupted once or twice by little returns of the phenomenon. I don't know whether you would like to see the lampoon or not; if you would like it I will send it to you. You may wish to have it as a curiosity from the circumstances in which it was written. If I had as much blood in my body as you people of the stout persuasion, I should certainly never have missed what little I had lost; but, when I began to go about again, after two or three days in the house, I found I only liked short walks and easy ones. Then I would catch annoying little colds, and they bothered me; then I had a violent pain in the shoulder for some days, and that bothered me; then I got a heavy cold not long since, which, though I managed to stifle it pretty well by taking it in time, has, nevertheless, bothered me very much indeed. Indeed, I have had the doctor again this week. He says I want open-air exercise as soon as the weather is good; and, praise God, I heard a bird singing this morning before any of us were out of bed. So there you have a succinct *résumé* of the whole matter. . . . Indeed, I am getting rather livelier again these last few days. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *February 18th, 1870.*

You want a bulletin. Marry, I don't know that I can give you any other than I have given you already, to wit, that I'm *nae waur*. I never have any pains. Indeed, I think I begin to feel stronger this week; but, of course, in a case of my present kind progress can only be marked at longish intervals. I am very sensibly better than I was a

month since. So let us thank God, and take courage. You will get the lampoon next week. And, as regards that *pome*, be it known that I have designedly banished all thoughts of it from my mind for a time, until my head get a little stronger again. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *March 5th, 1870.*

I am better again than I have been for a good while. The weather, too, looks a little better to-day, and so I am preparing my mind, body, and clothes for a *sortie* the very first time that a "shining hour" appears that shall offer reasonable prospects to a somewhat frail "improver." How delightful it will be. If it should do no more than merely break up the monotony of one's daily life indoors, and induce or enforce the slightest change of habits, it will do one good and be a blessing.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Let us thank God if, after all our afflictions, we are conscious of any softening of our hearts to other people's ills and failings; or of any increased earnestness in wrestling against our own arrogance of mind or temper; or even of any increased readiness to own its presence in our breasts when it is there. But, lo! is not this preaching again. . . . I find I am not yet strong enough to make much of the old dramatists: I must read modern for a while yet. I should like Stanley's *Life of Arnold;* Henry Taylor's *Plays;* Dean Milman's *Poems*. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *March 12th, 1870.*

I must make an era of this week, a favourable era too,

for I thank heaven I have once more been in the open air. Thursday was the day, the blessèd heaven-born day that brought me the renewal of intercourse with Nature, this renewal of free access to the sunshine and the softer winds. Did you ever experience a restoration of this kind? Unless you have, you cannot form any notion of what it is really like to the restored. It is a quarter of a year since I was out of doors last, and I own to you that the imprisonment has been irksome enough. And so, I suppose it is not to be wondered at very much that when I got to the open air on Thursday (it was the 10th of March, mark it with a red letter), and saw the sunlight lying on the fields, and the water of the Jed glinting beneath it, and felt the soft wind blowing on my face again, it brought the water into my eyes, and a sensation into my throat that made me unable to answer when my father spoke to me. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *March 19th, 1870.*

. . . . The time available for writing your letter was consumed in this great out-of-door enterprise, and in the preliminary and subsequent arrangements for it. For you must know that my goings-out are not mere matters of hat-donning and doing it. Ah! no. They are expeditions, undertakings, high and perilous enterprises. They are the cynosures of all the eyes in the establishment. When I set out I am loaded with plaids, coats, and good advices; and when I come in again I am greeted like one returning from a far country. In short, it is great fun. . . .

To the REV. ROBERT P. DOUGLAS.

BANKEND, *March 23rd, 1870.*

My ever-dear Boy,—Why have I not written to you long

ago? Not because your image is grown indistinct to me, for I think of you too often to allow that to grow possible. Nor because I have been careless either, although appearances are a good deal against me. Nor yet because your letters have been uninteresting to me; for they have been quite the reverse, and have all been read and read again oftener than I can tell you—especially that one about your perils among those Annandale lions on your way to *Leeshens*. But, alas! Robert of mine, the truth is, I have not been able to write, at least not without an amount of pain and labour attending the effort the contemplation of which was too oppressive to permit that effort to be made. This state of affairs dates from the middle of October, when I had a rather smart attack of bleeding at the lungs. I didn't think all the blood that I lost would turn out to be very material after all, but I was wrong; for this same attack proved to be the commencement of a series of aches, ails, colds, catarrhs, and such matters, which finally brought me exceedingly low. I have not been out of doors since before Christmas until the other day, and, in short, I have had a very miserable winter in the chimney corner.

March 24.—I was stopped here yesterday by something or other, I forget what. I am easily stopped just now; and, when I am stopped, it is a hundred to one but I don't start again. I suppose the fact that I have resumed so soon may be taken as a sign of improvement. Indeed, I was inclined to believe myself decidedly improving during those three or four fine days which we had recently, and when I managed to get out of doors; but this fresh descent upon us of the "enemy, winter and rough weather," has somewhat knocked the heels from under my hopes, and left them sprawling. I suppose they will gather their legs again when decent weather returns. In the meantime there is nothing for it but the

attitude of the sheep in winter as our Walter describes them—

> "With meek despondency they eye
> The withered sward and wintry sky."

By the way, do you ever remember the weather in your last prayer on Sundays? Don't forget it, my suckling apostle!

But, ah! my budding Saint Paul, what is this you tell me of being unpopular in the *vawcancies?* Don't be unpopular, my boy; it will never do. Look at me; I was unpopular; and behold this state of wreck, shelvation, and overwhummlement generally. Now there is no use saying that it is pleasant to be wrecked, shelved, and overwhummled; for it isn't—*experto crede.* Roar, therefore, swing your arms and beat your pulpit till the Bible dances upon it, and, in short, have at them violently, and there is no fear but some of them will give you a call for your roar. Speaking seriously, it is necessary to be popular in some degree, and I know very well that the attainment of that necessary degree lies quite in your power, Robert; indeed, I am not sure but it lies even in my own—that is to say, it *did* lie, before my heavens fell about my ears. At any rate, if the Divine Healer were ever to say to me, "Be cured, and preach again," I think I should make a stronger effort to be popular than I did before. Of course, to seek popularity for its own sake, or for the sake of bread and butter, is not the search I am speaking of; but, if one is to work, he must get into some field or other; and ours is a field to which that is the only gateway I am aware of. So, Robert, my dear, "improve the shining hour," and get a "sphere" for yourself. Get a quiet country one, if possible, but get some sort or other; for the "shining

hour" has a trick of passing away and not coming back again—

> "There was a craw sat on a stane,
> It flew away and there was nane."

I am glad you have seen and like that "Premature Report." It was made since I saw you. The other poems were put in the *Scotsman* to see how people would like them. Some people liked them very well. Brown would tell you of my visit to his summer-quarters, which I enjoyed very greatly, and which, indeed, greatly benefited me. He is a very fine fellow, as you would find when you met him at Moffat. Now write immediately and let me know your new appointments and journeys; it will cheer me up to hear from you. Indeed, I could almost stand a visit of you soon, if the weather would mend and let me out of doors again. I have been quite unvisitable all winter. Half-an-hour's talk knocked me up. I had a letter from Geordie a few days ago; pray let him know why I have been silent so long. I hope your mother and Sandy are keeping well. Remember me to all your friends.

To —— ——.

BANKEND, *March 26th, 1870.*

Behold at long and at last and at length the so-called Lampoon, or rather to be named the "Hobgoblinade" than anything else. My latest impression of it on reading it over at length is that it is dull: say truly, does it strike you as being of that nature? I don't care if you do say so.

I really don't know whether to lie down and give in or not. Storms and snows again; and yet last Saturday I thought they were over and gone for the year, and past for good and all. This renewed visitation, I confess, is really

to be put in the catalogue of things which justify the saying that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick." However, it would scarcely be reasonable either to succumb now. It would be rather pusillanimous to bear up through a whole protracted winter, and then to lie down in dust and ashes and a pool of tears, when I have already smelt spring air and seen the crocus. That would be sinking in harbour alongside the quay. No, we will not give in! "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."

I was progressing pretty well during those fine days. The first two of them I kept cautiously to the end of the house where the sun was shining, and there paced backwards and forwards. Then I made my way to the wooden bridge—my father going with me in case I should break down; but I didn't break down. And last Sunday I launched out courageously and alone, and managed to walk as far as to the other end of the orchard walk and back—a feat which surprised the whole family and myself too. On Monday I repeated the exploit; and on Tuesday it was *on-ding o' snaw* again.

I have benefited so much, however, by these walks and draughts of fresh air, that I have felt stronger all the rest of this week, although I have been close prisoner again all the time. Still, I cannot help screwing the Psalmist's prayer into my own point of view and saying—"Turn thou my captivity like the streams in the south; then shall my mouth be filled with laughter, and my tongue with singing." . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *April 2nd, 1870.*

Here is a shining, gleaming, altogether magnificent spring morning—a jewelly morning; and my father insists upon getting my overshoes drawn on to mine feet, and seeing me start for the Orchard Walk. O, sunshiny spring morning,

thou wert not made for sitting indoors and writing letters; let me be out to be a portion of the sunshine and of thee! So he declares, or would declare, if he only knew his Byron; but he neither knows him nor cares therefor. His earnestness, however, leads me to compromise the matter with him, and so I am going to have the overshoes donned and sally forth—one part of the compromise being that at the same time I shall take the letter and a pencil along with me, and do part of your epistle as I sit in the sun and enjoy the delicious weather. I was along the same way yesterday, and, in the course of my walk, which was only half-way along, I saw a bee, a fly, and a *sodger* (insect clad in scarlet), so that the signs of spring are now unmistakeable. Mercur*ious*,* too, has planted a series of seats all along the walk, right in the sun's eye; and I can lounge along from one to another of them without any necessity of fatiguing myself. And now I will "bundle and go."

Then follows the rest in pencil:—

"The Well."—And so we return to our muttons—that is to say, our pencil at the well. This well is rather more than half-way along the walk; it is situated in a roundish recess, very well sheltered from wind, but superintended almost all the day long by the sun; and here Mercurious has judiciously placed one of his seats. . . .

I must not forget to mention that there are several buds of a small early chamædrys—a kind of speedwell—to right and left of me, which have come into bloom since yesterday. They are extremely beautiful and cheering to look at, and I can't keep my eyes from seeking them whenever I look off the paper.

* A fun-name for his nephew, John, because he used to take his letters to the post. The mis-spelling was intended.

I had no idea the "Hobgoblinade" would prove so sensational as it seems to have done in your case. I suspect you have been thinking of the thing more than of the *pome*. As for the bringing of myself to do it, I can't say I felt any special difficulty. It was a mere amusement interjected between attacks and doses. The dulness I spoke of referred to a want of speed in the action, and in the succession of the parts. Write out some copies, and send them in the book parcel next week. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *April 8th, 1870.*

The books (Froude, Vol. XII, and Taylor's *Poems*) arrived all safe. I am unlucky in my choice of biographies; it seems that my taste in that direction coincides with that of so many other people, that we are always pushing one another from attaining that which is common goal to the body of us. Never mind, we have at last secured Taylor, and he, I think, formed one of my first list.

Talking *bulletinically* (I am not sure if this word be in the smaller dictionaries), this has been a good week for us. My mother and I have been out every day, more or less, until to-day, which is raining, but not to be very much abused considering the dry company of its predecessors. We can afford to give up one day in the seven to winds and rains, when the remainder is so breezy and sunny and full of the operations of the spring.

I can't say that I am conscious of much improvement yet, however; but, so far as my recollection of this class of affairs goes, I rather believe this is to be expected. I remember crawling about for several weeks in the spring of 1867 without knowing myself any stronger at all, but only more despondent and down-in-the-mouth. I am not

despondent and down-in-the-mouth this time, for I am grown wiser now, and, I hope, more patient and less fretful than when I had left good health only a few months behind. This condition of spirits will tell in my favour bodily by and bye. I find it at present very difficult to walk much, my limbs are so stiff and jointless, and my allowance of wind as yet so limited. But I spend always about two or three hours in the open air, sitting and lounging upon Mercurious' rough-and-ready benches, and bearing my mother company in her essays at resuming open-air habits of life. I don't know whether you would laugh or cry to see our going out and our coming in; I think, perhaps, you would do both at once. We sally forth in the forenoon when the sun has well asserted its power, each with a stick (the sticks are of hazel), and hirple along to bench the first. We sit there a good while (indeed my mother has never gone any farther yet). By and bye I start on another stage of my constitutional, and, achieving with a *pech* the next Mercurial bench, I cast myself down there for a few more minutes; and so throughout the series, until I reach the well where stands the last of them, and whence I start again and *da capo* the process until I come up to my mother's station, where we remain until it is almost time for dinner. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *April 16th, 1870.*

. . . . Talking of the preaching era, I have had several letters from Robert, poor fellow—who could get no information respecting me—and each letter louder and more importunate than its predecessor in beseeching me to let him know if I were well or ill. At last I wrote him, and have heard from him again. . . . I have advised him to go in for a quiet country kirk if possible. Oh, that I

were able to do it again myself! You see I am not ambitious now; a quiet little congregation, and a quiet little manse, and two quiet little sermons on the Sunday—how pleasant it would be. . . . I am going to get the loan of *Arnold's Life* from Scott out of the Wallace Green Library, which will save any further trouble on that head. . . .

To the Same.

BANKEND, *April 23rd, 1870.*

Behold a small note. Receive the poor little (*) tenderly, for it is of a humble disposition, and makes no pretension whatsoever to be a full grown letter. It merely professes to be a sort of boy-herald bearing the message, that the principal person will arrive on Monday morning, but that he has unfortunately been unable to get himself written in time for the postal arrangements.

To the Same.

BANKEND, *April 24th, 1870.*

I hope the letterette, the *notie*, the lean little missive which I sent off to herald the somewhat larger document I am beginning to-day, reached you all safe last night, and kept you from indulging any alarms, apprehensions, terrors, or dreads about this epistle's non-appearance. The fact is, I scarcely can tell you, just in a single breath, what it was that prevented me. It was no big and decisive cause in particular, but rather a train of small ones. I was impeded and entangled; not stopped as by a nine feet wall. I caught a slight cold somewhere, I think, about Thursday. It showed its hoof—its cloven one—unmistakeably on Friday

* Word omitted. The first time such an omission has occurred in these letters.—ED.

afternoon, and so the beginning of your letter was deferred till the Saturday. But, at the same time, I was prescribed a course of breakfasts-in-bed by my father and mother. So, just to please them and annoy my cold, I have submitted to the mean and ignoble expedient. I take breakfast in bed! How chopfallen I am now! How cowed! . . . If ever you took breakfast in bed you will know that when you have an honest desire to get up in decent time, your only chance of so doing lies in the exercise of speed and promptitude. You mustn't lie down again, or you are lost. You must jump out resolutely as soon as the door closes upon the retreating tray. In fact you had better make a spring at your empty cup and saucer. Now, yesterday I didn't attend to this precaution. No, but I was so lost to caution and to sense, and to my own knowledge of the risk I was running, that I lay down again, and rose not up until it was too late. . . .

And now, isn't it time to leave this topic. But, before leaving it, I ought to have said that the cold is just about better again, and that if the day had been a fine one I should have been out and trying to take my usual "walks abroad!" I don't manage this matter of walking well yet. My limbs have been so stiffened by having sat almost all winter, that I find it no easy matter to supple them again. Of course practice will do it, but practice requires more pith than I am possessor of at present. So I have been making a paction with my father to take his arm for some time every day, and, as he is a swift walker, I shall have to compass greater distances with him than I can possibly manage when left to my own devices and those of my hazel stick. It makes me conscious of a certain mingled and mixed feeling, akin to sorrow and akin to shame, to remember that I am thirty-one and my father seventy years old. In the meantime my mother is improving very fast,

or at least she is resuming her old busy ways and habits very fast. This I know principally by her thousand-a-day attentions to myself—nameless little attentions which are full of comfort, and so soothing that I sometimes imagine that I must be getting babyish again. But if I don't leave this strain of talking, I shall run the risk of making my whole letter a bulletin of health. . . .

As for books, I cannot give you any list this week. I find that I can only read passably stiff books for an hour or two in the forenoon. Froude suits me: Taylor I cannot read yet. So, *lightish* is the word. I will say more about this next week if I can. . . . Pray for good weather. God bless you.

This was his last letter. It was written on the Sunday. On the Monday he was out of doors. His father accompanied him, carrying a seat on which he rested when he was fatigued; for the spaces between the benches which his nephew had put up in the orchard were now too long for his feeble strength. The grass with which the orchard had been sown was beginning to appear in tender blade. The invalid, who had cheered himself in dark December by picturing what that grass would be like, smiled when he saw it, and said it was very beautiful. He was never in the open air again. On the Thursday evening he retired to rest apparently no worse than he had been for several days; but early on Friday morning his father heard him coughing more than usual, and went to his bed-side. He saw at once the signs of an impending change, and called the other members of the household to take their long farewell. Mr. Polson,

his faithful friend and minister, was sent for, and to him Davidson quietly and in few words—as was his wont—gave humble expression to the Christian hope which sustained his heart. Like John MacLeod Campbell, "He spoke not much of religion when dying. His silent death was like his life, an 'Amen' to God's will." He passed calmly away at noon on the 29th of April, 1870. Thus he fell on the very threshold of the summer for which he had longed so intensely. When they carried him out to his grave "there was blossom on all the apple and pear trees; blackbirds and mavises were building their nests and singing songs; the ground was covered with grass." They bore him through the old familiar streets up to the New Cemetery, and laid him on a gentle slope that lies to the sun and looks up the Jed-water. In two months the mother, who had been his companion in weakness, was laid by his side. In death they were not divided. He lies in an honoured grave; it is marked by a tombstone on which these words are inscribed :—

Thomas Davidson,

LICENCIATE OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

Born at Oxnam Row, 7th July, 1838,

Died at Bankend, Jedburgh, 29th April, 1870.

THIS STONE IS RAISED IN SACRED REMEMBRANCE
BY HIS COLLEGE COMPANIONS.

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